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Examining the Reception of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan Immigrant Students and Families by the Public Education System of Buenos Aires, Argentina

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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in Education

by

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Examining the Reception of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan Immigrant Students and Families by the Public Education System of Buenos Aires, Argentina

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ABSTRACT

Examining the Reception of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan Immigrant Students and Families by the Public Education System of Buenos Aires, Argentina

by

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Currently, more people than ever are migrating globally as a result of issues such as the search for economic resources, negative effects of environmental degradation, and displacement due to political conflicts. Considering that the mass movement of peoples is continuing at a strong pace, it is evident that immigration and its regulation by the state are major issues to be faced the 21st century. While there are multiple sites within the public domain in which the state and immigrant communities may interact, schools provided an ideal environment to investigate this relationship in Argentina due to the state-mandated enrollment of all children. Consequently, many immigrants had at least some contact with the state through educational institutions, as a substantial portion, such as Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan (i.e., Latin American) immigrants in Buenos Aires, often relocated with their children.

Given the increasing heterogeneity of student populations around the world as a result of immigration, public schools occupy increasingly conflicting roles; while there is

potential for formal education to serve as a means for attaining social and economic mobility, public schools also have been heavily criticized for reproducing inequities within society. This unique position of schools makes them especially salient in the experiences of nondominant immigrant populations, and therefore this study utilized the reception of Latin American immigrant populations in the public education system of Buenos Aires as a window into examining the treatment of nondominant immigrant populations by state institutions. Taking special consideration of the impacts of the intersection of race, class, and culture in the reception of such populations, this research was carried out as a 15-month ethnographic, comparative study of two public primary schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 2014-2016. Methods included participant observation within the schools, semi-structured interviews with 13 school personnel, and photo-elicitation interviews with 48 5th grade students.

Findings from this study suggested that despite outward promotions of equality and the recognition of diversity, deeply-rooted biases and notions of the superiority of whiteness dominated the interactions between public schools in Buenos Aires and Latin American immigrant communities, reflecting the treatment of Latin American immigrants throughout Argentine society. Overall, problematic perceptions of Latin American immigrant students and families circulated among school personnel, negatively impacting their approaches to working with such populations. Nonetheless, there was also a small yet determined group of school personnel engaged in critical education working to improve the educational experiences of Latin American immigrant students and families. Ultimately, however, formal and informal policies upheld by the schools systematically positioned Latin

American immigrant students and families as outsiders within the school system, leaving them at a disadvantage in their pursuit of an equitable educational experience.

These findings indicated that in addition to examinations of formal policy, there is a need for investigations of the implementation of such policies and other informal policies that shape the day-to-day happenings within schools and other public institutions. This is vital as they relate to the promotion of the equitable treatment of nondominant populations by the state, as this study indicated that superficial multicultural policies alone were insufficient at combating biases among the dominant population and dismantling institutionalized discrimination. Findings from this study also suggested a continued need for the examination of race and whiteness in Latin American contexts.

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I. Introduction

It was the beginning of the second week of the 2015 academic year in the City of Buenos Aires, and it was my second day of classroom observations. Squeezing between students in a small 5th grade classroom, I made my way to an extra student desk in the back of the room. Suddenly, a school administrator entered the room. There had been a conflict in which a white student had been picking on a Latin American immigrant student of indigenous heritage, and she was there to ensure that everyone was starting out the year on the right foot. She began by praising the cultural diversity of Argentina, explaining that it was a country of immigrants. She went on to stress that everyone was equal and that they should treat everyone accordingly. However, what started as a lecture on proper school behavior slipped into a monologue that revealed tensions that had been building in the school, in the neighborhood, and across the entire city. "Many of you don't even live inside the city," she said. "Your parents don't pay the taxes for you to go to this school, yet the city government still allows you to go to this schools for free." She continued by saying that it was the school's job to teach, not to provide food or books. Her gaze was clearly directed at students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families, many of whom lived in *Provincia*, the area just outside of the city limits of Buenos Aires (Fieldnote 3.17.15, *Escuela Europea*).[1]

This interaction between a school administrator and students reflected the complex intersection of race, class, and culture in Argentine society that influenced the country's reception of Latin American immigrants of nondominant backgrounds, such as those of

[1] All research sites and surrounding areas are referred to using pseudonyms.

Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay.[2] It also demonstrated a contradiction common throughout the City of Buenos Aires and Argentine society more broadly: despite an outward promotion of equality and recognition of diversity, deeply-rooted biases and notions of the superiority of whiteness dominated the interactions of Latin American immigrant communities with individuals and institutions of the Argentine state, such as public schools.

While there are multiple sites within the public domain in which the state and immigrant communities may interact (e.g., Betrisey, 2012; Paerregaard, 2012), schools provided an ideal environment to investigate this relationship in Argentina due to the state-mandated enrollment of all children (Gvirtz, Beech, & Oria, 2008). While historically Latin American immigrants' access to such institutions was heavily regulated in Argentina, changes in legislation in 2004 granted immigrants the right to public education regardless of citizenship status (Beheran & Novaro, 2011). As a result, many immigrants had at least some contact with the state through educational institutions, as a substantial portion, such as Andean (i.e., Bolivian and Peruvian) and Paraguayan immigrants in Buenos Aires (Cerrutti, 2009), often relocated with their children.

In addition to introducing promising legislation for immigrants, the federal and local government had also begun making attempts at promoting multiculturalism to address its diversifying population; however, these attempts had been mostly superficial, and Argentine public schools still promoted a narrowly defined European national identity and culture (Beheran, 2011; Novaro, 2005). Consequently, public schools still typically expected the

[2] From this point forward, I use the term "Latin American immigrants" to refer to Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants in Argentina.

assimilation of students of immigrant families[3] to existing norms, reinforcing notions of the superiority of the dominant group, which consisted of native Argentines of European descent. These biases and the schools' lack of accommodation of nondominant groups have the potential to hinder schools' ability to build relationships with Latin American immigrant students, families, and communities, which are essential for the promotion of the academic achievement and socioemotional development of students (e.g., Arriaza & Wagner, 2012; Auerbach, 2007; Baumann, Rodríguez, & Parra-Cardona, 2011; Delgado Gaitan, 2012; DeShera, 2012; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Falicov, 2007).

This investigation explored the experiences of students and families of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant backgrounds with the Argentine state by way of examining public schools as state institutions and the actors that carry out their formal and informal policies. In doing so, the following questions were considered:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between public schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families?
    a. How are formal and informal policies that impact immigrant students and families carried out within schools?
    b. In what ways is this relationship reflective of the relationship between the Argentine state and Latin American immigrant groups in the public sphere?

[3] I use the terms "students/children of immigrant families" and "immigrant students/children" interchangeably to refer to first- and second-generation immigrant children.

2. In what ways is the relationship between public schools and Latin American immigrant students and families impacted by school personnel's approaches to working with immigrant groups?
    a. How do school personnel view immigrant students and families?
    b. How do they understand their role as educators in working with diverse student populations?
3. What messages do schools send, either directly or indirectly, to Latin American immigrant students and families about their position within Argentine society?

While exploring the answers to these questions, this study sought to shed light not only on the treatment of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families in state institutions such as public schools but also on the underlying biases that shape formal and informal policies carried out within them. Given the increasing heterogeneity of student populations around the world as a result of immigration due to issues such as the search for economic resources, negative effects of environmental degradation, and displacement due to political conflicts, school have occupied increasingly conflicting roles; while there has been potential for formal education to serve as a means for attaining social and economic mobility, public schools also have been heavily criticized for reproducing inequities within society (e.g., Bravo-Moreno, 2009; Collins, 2009; Freire, 1970; Xu & Hampden-Thomas, 2012). This unique position of schools in society made them especially salient in the experiences of nondominant immigrant populations, and therefore this study utilized the reception of Latin American immigrant populations in the public education system of Buenos Aires as a

window into examining the treatment of nondominant immigrant populations by state institutions.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Case of Buenos Aires, Argentina

"Dios está en todas partes, pero atiende en Buenos Aires."[4]

"God is everywhere, but his office is in Buenos Aires."

-Argentine proverb

In many ways, Buenos Aires was like any other global city in that it had long attracted immigrants seeking upward social mobility. However, unlike global cities such as London, Sydney, and New York City that served as gateway cities for immigrants of diverse backgrounds (Anisef & Lanphier, 2003; Price & Benton-Short, 2007), historically Buenos Aires had attracted primarily immigrants of European descent (Chasteen, 2006). Although Argentina received immigrants from across Latin America, shifts in immigrant populations had begun to occur only recently in the City of Buenos Aires, where many of the country's elite resided. The increasing visibility of Latin American immigrant populations in the city also happened to be coinciding with a major economic and political crisis sweeping the country. The combination of these factors placed newly arriving Latin American immigrants in a distinct social position as compared to European immigrant communities of the past.

Immigrant populations of Argentina. Throughout its history, Argentina has been a popular destination for immigrants, though the composition of the immigrant population has changed over time. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, millions of immigrants from European countries, especially Italy and Spain, came to the City of Buenos Aires to explore economic opportunities. At the peak of this migration in 1914, it was estimated that 30% of the

[4] A commonly used phrase throughout the country, this proverb highlighted the elevated status of the City of Buenos Aires in Argentine political and economic affairs.

population of Argentina was European-born (Chasteen, 2006; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, 2010).

Although Argentina's population was once made up of a large number of European immigrants, much had changed in recent years: according to the 2010 Census, only around 4.5% of the country was foreign-born, and European immigrants no longer made up the majority of that population. That is, only 16.6% of foreign-born individuals living in Argentina were from European countries, and the majority of this population (64.9%) was over the age of 65 (see Table 2.1). Nonetheless, as European immigration declined, immigration from within the Americas continued at a steady yet stable pace, and it was much younger on the whole; in total, 81.5% of immigrants came from such countries, and only small fraction (11.9%) was over the age of 65. Most of these immigrants came from South American countries, as 30.5% of immigrants in Argentina were from Paraguay, 19.1% from Bolivia, and 8.7% from Peru. Immigration from each of these countries had been increasing slowly over the previous 25 years or so, and it had more than doubled since 1991 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, 2010).

Table 2.1

Foreign-born Population of Argentina by Country since 1991

Continent	Country	1991	%	2001	%	2010	%
South	Paraguay	240,450	14.9	325,046	21.2	550,713	30.5
America	Bolivia	143,569	8.9	233,464	15.2	345,272	19.1
	Peru	15,939	1.0	88,260	5.8	157,514	8.7
Europe	Italy	328,133	20.3	216,718	14.1	147,499	8.2
	Spain	224,500	13.9	134,417	8.8	94,030	5.2

Sources: INDEC. Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 1980 y 1991. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares, y Viviendas 2001 y 2010.

The changes in the backgrounds of the immigrant populations coming to Argentina were also reflected in public schools. This was especially true in the Greater Buenos Aires area,[5] where 62% of immigrants living in the country resided as of 2010 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, 2010). As the demographics of neighborhoods where immigrants tended to relocate had shifted, so had the demographics of the public schools located in those areas. As a result, many schools that were once made up almost entirely of children and grandchildren of Italian and Spanish immigrants were beginning to see increasing numbers of students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan heritage. However, the population of school personnel remained overwhelmingly of European descent. Because neither the city government nor the federal government collected statistics on the national or racial composition of the student or teaching populations of public schools, official estimates of the size of these populations were unavailable. Nonetheless, it was common knowledge throughout the City of Buenos Aires that these schools, and their corresponding neighborhoods, were located on the southern and western edges of the city. These neighborhoods also tended to be the poorest of the city.

Argentina's economic and political woes. Despite attracting immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay who were seeking financial opportunities and political stability, Argentina had its own recurring economic and political crises. Historically, Argentina had experienced a number of major economic collapses and political issues, but the economic crisis of 2001 had put the country in one of its weakest moments financially, and the country

[5] Greater Buenos Aires was the province in which the City of Buenos Aires was located. However, the City of Buenos Aires maintained its own local government.

was struggling to bounce back. The country's inability to control inflation, its dwindling reserves of U.S. dollars, and the growth of a currency black market exemplified the instability of the Argentine economy and government at the time of this research.

In terms of inflation, the Argentine federal government was known to argue that its inflation rate was much lower than it actually was. For instance, in 2013, the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INDEC), the federal government's official statistics institute, released information indicating that its inflation rate was around 10% per year, a number so shockingly low that even employees from the INDEC claimed it was false and launched protests. However, in early 2014, the International Monetary Fund stepped in and forced the Argentine government to provide more accurate information, resulting in the recognition of a more accurate inflation rate: 3.7% *per month* at its peak (Mallén, 2014). Unfortunately, the economic situation in Argentina did not improve much over the next year. By the end of 2015, the INDEC estimated inflation for the year at an astounding 30% ("Argentina estimó inflación," 2016), and even that estimate may be conservative given that the institute's monthly estimates of inflation continued to be lower than independent sources.

In addition to dealing with a high rate of inflation, the Argentine government was also facing issues with its dwindling federal reserve of U.S. dollars, which were needed for participation in the global market and the repayment of foreign debts. In attempts at controlling its economic instability and preserving what few U.S. dollars remained in its reserves, in 2011 the Argentine federal government imposed restrictions on Argentine residents for the purchasing of U.S. dollars from banks (Hanger, 2015). These restrictions on

the purchasing of dollars in combination with many Argentines frantically seeking to convert their savings to a more stable currency resulted in the growth of a black market for buying and selling Argentine *pesos* and U.S. dollars.

The currency black market had become such a significant part of the economy of Buenos Aires in 2015 that the black market value of the *peso* in relation to the U.S. dollar, referred to as the *dólar blue*, was published daily next to the official rate determined by the government in *La Nación*, one of the country's most popular news sources, as well as on a number of websites and social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. As of August 2015, the *dólar blue* was approximately 59% higher than the official rate (1 U.S. dollar to 15.84 *pesos* versus 1 U.S. dollar to 9.28 *pesos*, respectively) ("El dólar blue", 2015). As economists have noted, the black-market value of currencies oftentimes more accurately reflects its buying power than official rates and demonstrates public distrust in the government's ability to control its currency in situations where such markets exist (e.g., Hanger, 2014).

The volatility of the Argentine *pesos* and the instability of the economy were devastating for lower- and middle-class populations, despite the government's insistence otherwise. Although Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, Argentina's president at the time, claimed its poverty rate was less than 5% ("Ante la FAO", 2015; Lee, 2015), according to the former employees of the INDEC that protested the release of false inflation rates, the poverty rate in Argentina was closer to 25% at the end of 2014 ("Argentine gov't blasts", 2015). The *Universidad Católica de Argentina* (UCA) released similar estimates, indicating the poverty rate was over 28% (Lee, 2015; "Para la UCA", 2015). The federal government,

however, ceased to release poverty statistics in 2013, leaving no official estimates of the percentage of Argentines being impacted severely by the economic crisis. Furthermore, despite improvements that had been made over the previous decade, the unemployment rate in Argentina was one of the highest in Latin America (Quiroga, 2015), and according to independent economists, in 2015 approximately 42% of Argentine workers were employed outside of the formal labor market where minimum wage and workers' rights regulations did not exist (Jueguen, 2015).

Intersections of Race, Class, and Culture in the Construction of Anti-Latin American Immigrant Sentiment in Argentina

Argentina's economic and political situation was relevant to its reception of Andean and Paraguayan immigrant populations in state-controlled institutions because it has been argued that these issues in combination with the xenophobic attitudes that were promoted throughout the 1990s provided the perfect incubator for anti-immigrant sentiment to grow (Grimson, 2005); that is, research has suggested that anti-immigrant attitudes tend to stem from a combination of the threat of immigrants' impact on the culture of the host country as well as the possibility of increased economic competition for lower of middle class citizens (e.g., Fetzer, 2000; Mayda, 2006). However, while culture and class have been examined as contributing factors to anti-immigrant sentiment in Latin American contexts, these arguments often fail to consider a third key element that has contributed to disguising "desirable" from "undesirable" immigrants: race.

A brief history of the intersection of race, class, and culture in Latin America. The prevalence of racism has been a contested issue across many Latin American countries

(Dulitsky 2005), and Argentina is no exception (Joseph, 2000; Sutton 2008). Though there is a growing body of scholarly work arguing for the need to reintegrate race into Latin American studies (e.g., Dulitsky 2005; Hale 2006; Joseph 2000, Sutton 2008), there has been a persisting view of racism as a uniquely U.S. problem (Dulitzky, 2005; Wade, 2003; Warren & Twine, 2002). This is in part due to the framing of racism as stemming from tensions solely between whites and blacks, and in Argentina, this has been explained away through the denial of the existence of African-descended Argentine populations (Joseph, 2000). Furthermore, as Warren and Twine (2012) highlight, there has been a tendency to defer to the "use of *racial conflict*, rather than racial sentiments, disparities, or discrimination, as the principal measure of the 'race problem'" (p. 540, emphasis in original). Nonetheless, despite the popular rejection of the prevalence of racism throughout the region, the history of racial hierarchies in Latin America runs deep, and although the conception of race has been reshaped in unique ways in each country, intersections of race, class, and culture have been utilized to uphold white supremacy, including in Argentina.

Race arose as a system for organizing society in Latin America during the colonial period, and even since its inception, it has been linked to class and culture. During the 16th century, European elites established a complex social hierarchy, often referred to as the caste system in historical studies, based primarily on phenotypic characteristics, with socioeconomic factors such as level of education, material possessions, and economic wealth also contributing to social status and mobility. Under this system, proportions of indigenous, European, and African heritage were tracked in order to determine *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), and the higher the proportion of European heritage a person had,

the higher their social status (Chasteen, 2006). The financial situation of an individual also played a salient role in determining to which level of the caste system they belonged as a result of a policy known as *gracias al sacar*. Under the policy members of lower levels of the caste system could "buy whiteness" in a sense through the payment of heavy taxes to the Spanish Crown, which permitted them "to occupy positions of distinction and authority" (p. 85).

Consequently, participation in the political and economic system developed by Europeans and *criollos* (creoles, or individuals of European descent born in the Americas) was essential for acceptance into dominant society, especially for populations of indigenous and African descent. Nevertheless, as Chasteen states, "Creoles with little else going for them except for caste privilege complained bitterly about the sale of legal whiteness, saying it undermined the whole caste system" (p. 85), indicating limits to mobility through assimilation to the developing European political and economic systems for indigenous and African populations. This reflected the prevalence of the belief in the biological and cultural superiority of whites, and ultimately indigenous and African descended populations could only gain status through leveraging financial resources either to "buy whiteness" or to marry others with a stronger European lineage. Although it eventually become too complex over generations of racial mixing and collapsed, the remnants of the caste system continued to influence social relations in Latin America, with proportions of indigenous, African, and European heritage influencing social positioning based on race, with some lenience given based on assimilation to dominant economic and political systems.

As the colonial period came to a close and the caste system fell apart, social hierarchies began to change shape throughout the region. Creating a shared identity became increasingly necessary as elites pushed for independence from the Spanish Crown (Knight, 1990), as the support of indigenous and African populations was essential in this process. However, as Chasteen (2006) points out, the caste system had only worked to reinforce differences between groups, and after all, "What did an African slave, a Quechua-speaking villager, a landowner of pure Spanish blood, and a *mestizo*[6] have in common just because all had been born (for example) in the viceroyalty of Peru?" (p. 91). Nonetheless, those leading the fight for independence understood the need for a unified front in order to overthrow Spanish rule, which was necessary for elites to gain control over the region and escape the political and economic restrictions put in place by the Crown. Perceived differences between these populations had to be overcome, at least in terms of the ways in which the racial hierarchy was visible to nondominant populations, and with this came the rise of nationalism across Latin America.

A brief history of nationalism in Argentina. Though nation-building projects differed across Latin America, race remained an integral element of social stratification due to the persisting influence of European intellectualism, which argued for the biological and cultural superiority of whiteness (Stepan, 1991). Across much of Latin America, elites attempted to unify populations and create a sense of shared national identity by promoting an image of *mestizaje*, or a shared mixed racial and cultural heritage, to the masses, all while

[6] The term *mestizo* was used to describe a person of mixed indigenous and European heritage.

maintaining political and economic systems favoring whites (Golash-Boza & Bonilla-Silva, 2013). This image of *mestizaje*, however, did not take hold in Argentina as it did in other newly-forming countries such as present-day Mexico and Peru. Instead, during the formation of nationhood, elites pushed to preserve and promote Argentina's European heritage, while simultaneously creating and maintaining similar social and economic systems favoring white as other countries throughout the region. Consequently, Argentina perpetuated white supremacy and forged its national identity around its European roots, which was bolstered by its continued encouragement of European migration to the country. The promotion of European migration was reflected in the country's Constitution (established in 1853), which, in Article 25, explicitly addressed European migration:

> The Federal Government shall foster European immigration; and may not restrict, limit or burden with any tax whatsoever, the entry into the Argentine territory of foreigners who arrive for the purpose of tilling the soil, improving industries, and introducing and teaching arts and sciences. ("Constitution of the Argentine Nation")

Even after the passage of an open immigration policy in 1876, Latin American migration to Argentina still was not encouraged as European migration was (Belén Olmos Giupponi, 2011), and despite a series of changes to the Constitution throughout the mid- to late 1800s and again in 1994, Article 25 remained part of the document ("Constitution of the Argentine Nation").

The centering of whiteness in the construction of the Argentine national identity was also reflected in the works of Argentine political and intellectual elites of the 1800s, such as the highly regarded *Facundo* by Domingo Sarmiento.[7] As Joseph (2000) explains, in his

[7]Domingo Sarmiento served as President of Argentina from 1868-1874 and was considered the father of Argentine public education.

1845 text, Sarmiento laid out the instability of the early years of the Argentine Republic in terms of a struggle between "civilization" and "barbarism," which he linked to race, culture, class, and nation-state-related ideology. In her assessment of Sarmiento's work, Joseph (2000) summed up these major contrasting forces at play in *Facundo*:[8]

Civilization	**Barbarism**
Geography:	
Cities (esp. Buenos Aires)	Pampas, *Llanos,* rural area
Europe (esp. Northern)	South America
United States of North America	Arab world, Africa, Latin America
Politics:	
Patriots	Royalists
Constitutional rule	Arbitrary rule
Educated	Uneducated
Society	Lack of society
Progress	Anti-progress
Christianity	"Superstition"
Bodies:	
Northern Europeans	Indians, Africans
Fair skin	Dark skin
Clean	Unclean
Mind	Body/matter
European clothing	Indigenous clothing

Breaking up the opposing elements of "civilization" and "barbarism" Sarmiento discussed in terms of geography, politics, and bodies, Joseph demonstrated the complex system encompassing a variety of socially-constructed categories that laid the foundation for the Argentine national identity. As seen in *Facundo*, regions of the world dominated by white populations were seen as superior, as were elements of European culture and racial heritage, such as Christianity, Western education, fair skin, and European clothing. Joseph's analysis

[8] This list has been adapted from Joseph (2000) in an abbreviated form.

of *Facundo* also demonstrated the blurred lines between what constituted race, class, and culture in the formation of an ideal European national identity.

Early attempts at promoting the ideals that contributed to the country's white, European national identity were "successful" on the whole (Halperin Donghi, 1987), especially among residents of Buenos Aires, though it was transformed throughout the 1900s as class-based politics moved into the spotlight with the rise of populism. During this time, race and class became increasingly conflated as the white middle class sought to distinguish itself from the Peronist populist movement, linking non-white racial categories and the lower class (Garguin, 2007). Though populism took a strong hold in Argentine politics throughout the mid-1900s, white elites continued to dominate the political and economic systems of the country throughout the 20th century. Consequently, the myth of Argentines "descending from ships" from Europe persisted, even throughout a brutal dictatorship, known as the Dirty War, that plagued the entire country throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Anti-immigrant sentiment toward Bolivians, Peruvians, and Paraguayans in Argentina. The white, European national identity promoted in Argentina greatly impacted its reception of new waves of Latin American immigrants coming to the Buenos Aires area beginning in the mid-1980s. Though the country had established its national identity based on its immigrant history, this did not include immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay, many of whom were of indigenous heritage. As a result, Latin American immigrants were not seen as valuable as the European immigrants of the past. While historically poor European immigrants faced difficulty when coming to Buenos Aires in terms of

employment and housing much like newly arriving Latin American immigrants, a fair proportion of European immigrants, such as those from Italy, worked in specialized or white-collar labor sectors, and they were able to develop a number of social assistance programs and labor unions to allow members of their communities some level of social mobility (Baily, 1983). Later waves of Latin American immigrants, on the other hand, tended to be not only poor but also of racial and cultural backgrounds distinct from the dominant population.

Though Latin American immigrants and their children were once classified socially based on their being poor rather than based on their race, culture, or nationality, in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, Argentine politicians began using immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay as scapegoats for the economic and social difficulties the country was facing, blaming them for the lack of jobs available for Argentine citizens and other issues like high crime rates (Grimson, 2005). As Grimson (2005) notes, "The socially excluded became 'foreigners'" (p. 27), and as a result, Latin American communities living in Argentina tended to be viewed as racial, cultural, and national others, regardless of their place of birth, and faced heavy discrimination throughout society. Even in areas of Argentina where indigenous groups made up the majority of the population, such as near the country's borders with Bolivia and Paraguay, such individuals were still not considered Argentine by the dominant population.

Multiculturalism and the Argentine State

Changes in legislation impacting Latin American immigrant groups. As mentioned previously, the demographics of the immigrant populations of Argentina began to

shift in the late 1900s and into 2010 with the decline of European migration and a continued stream of Latin American immigration to the country. These 20th century migrations of "undesirable" populations were seen as such a problem and so distinct from the country's national identity that for many years, rather than attempting to integrate them into society through public institutions, many Latin American immigrants were denied access to social services entirely; Law Nº 22.439, enacted in 1981, placed heavy restrictions on the rights of immigrants living in Argentina without legal documentation, most of whom were from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay. For instance, hospitals and other social service institutions were required to report such immigrants to the state, and children without temporary or permanent residency were prohibited from attending public schools (Galarza, 2012).

However, the state's "official" approach to Latin American immigrants changed drastically in the early 2000s. In the midst of a shift from explicitly xenophobic attitudes toward the promotion of multicultural rhetoric, in 2004 the state enacted Law N° 25.871, which declared that the state must "assure equal access to immigrants and their families the same conditions of protection, refuge and rights that nationals enjoy, in particular social services, public goods, health, education, justice, work, employment, and social security,"[9] regardless of their immigration status (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, 2010, p. 10).

Multicultural education in Argentine public schools. Despite this change in federal legislation impacting immigrant groups, changes in the treatment of immigrant

[9] Translation by author. The original read, "El Estado en todas sus jurisdicciones, asegurará el acceso igualitario a los inmigrantes y sus familias en las mismas condiciones de protección, amparo y derechos de los que gozan los nacionales, en particular lo referido a servicios sociales, bienes públicos, salud, educación, justicia, trabajo, empleo y seguridad social" (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, 2010, p. 10).

groups in state institutions appeared to have been mostly superficial, such as the promotion of multicultural education in public schools. Though there are several forms of multicultural education (Guppy & Lyon, 2012), a prevalent perspective on multiculturalism is similar to that of Gutmann (2004), who argued, "A democracy should tolerate and recognize those cultures that are compatible with mutual toleration and recognition within and across cultural groups" (p. 73). However, this approach to multiculturalism has been heavily critiqued for failing to combat social inequities, and, as Guppy and Lyon (2012) argued, "too embedded in a liberal rhetoric of 'equality of opportunity,' and thus insufficiently attuned to issues of unequal power among groups and particularly blind to issues of racism, discrimination and exploitation" (p. 120). These critiques of multiculturalism have implied that it will do little to disrupt the existing power structure between social groups.

White, European national identity in public schools. In order to understand how national identity functions, it is helpful to examine social identity in general. According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), an individual develops a social identity through his or her understanding of membership to a group and the value associated with being a member of that group. The understanding of group membership is associated with the development of social categorizations, or "discontinuous divisions of the social world into distinct classes or categories" (Tajfel, 1972 as cited in Turner, 1982), and the categorization criteria that determine such groups are based on how they compare to other groups. As Tajfel (1981) stated, "the definition of a group (national, racial or any other) makes no sense unless there are other groups around. A group becomes a group in the sense of being perceived as having common characteristics or a common fate mainly because other groups are present in the

environment" (p. 258). Therefore, individuals understand group membership based on similarities to those within the group and differences from those outside of the group, allowing this system of categorization to both include as well as exclude individuals from a group (Turner, 1982).

This creation of an "us" and a "them" in social identity processes is precisely what causes friction between the maintenance of nationalist ideology based on the dominant culture and nondominant immigrant populations in educational contexts. Immigrant populations, especially those deemed "undesirable," disrupt ideologies of homogeneity (Castles & Davidson, 2000; Vertovec, 2011), which are essential for establishing a shared social and political identity with the nation-state and therefore the acceptance of its governance. According to Castles (2004), "Ethnocultural diversity is seen by political elites as a threat to the integrity of the nation, which could weaken it in the event of economic recession, war, or catastrophes. However, they also believe that difference is controllable" (p. 23-24). Consequently, the state may seek to control the impacts of heterogeneity among its population in order to promote a shared national identity.

Although globalization literature has stressed the declining power of the nation-state (e.g., Castles, 2004), the modern state has maintained a strong influence on public institutions, such as public schools, through direct and indirect influence on local institutional policies and practices. Historically, this control over public education institutions in particular made schools ideal sites for the reinforcement of select ideology such national identity and norms of the dominant culture (Anselmi, 2013). In Argentina, this led to the continued positioning of European immigration as a cornerstone of the Argentine

national identity and dominant culture in public schools despite the changes that took place in the composition of its immigrant populations and state policy toward Latin American immigrants.

Furthermore, as Argentine scholars have pointed out, the country's history of European immigration has been romanticized, decontextualized, and overinflated as the ancestry of the country's entire population in public schools (e.g., Beheran, 2011; Novaro, 2005). For instance, in her study of civic education in public schools in Buenos Aires, Novaro (2005) found that teachers taught the history of immigration to Argentina in a way that highlighted European immigrants' participation in the construction of the nation without any mention of the difficulties immigrants of diverse backgrounds faced in integrating themselves into Argentine society. The reality, however, was that public schools were developed in Latin America specifically to address this issue: during the mid- to late 1800s, as Latin American elites struggled to unite European, native, and former-slave populations under their newly independent governing bodies (Chasteen, 2006), schools served as strong agents of homogenization toward national identity and culture (Galarza, 2012). Teachers included in Novaro's (2005) work also only discussed immigration to the country in historical terms, with some making reference to all Argentines being descendants of such immigrants. The teaching of Argentina's history of immigration in this way had been detrimental to immigrants from other regions, particularly indigenous and African-descended populations, in that their migrations and their impact on society, both in the past and in the present, were ignored completely in order to maintain and promote the country's national identity as European (Beheran, 2011; Novaro, 2005).

Argentine schools and the promotion of assimilation. Despite formal policies implemented by federal and local governments, public schools in decentralized systems have maintained a certain level of autonomy, which, in theory, should allow for their adaptation to the communities in which they are located in order to better serve their student populations. At the time of this research, on the local level, schools with Western models of education often officially promoted rhetoric related to the appreciation of diversity and multicultural attitudes on the surface (Guppy & Lyon, 2012), but research indicated that they still tended to encourage assimilation to the beliefs and practices of the dominant group (e.g., Andrews, 2013; Galarza, 2012).

Because of this promotion of the dominant culture, for students of nondominant groups, practices that were valued within their own communities were treated as a deficit in public schools (Galarza, 2012), and in some instances, schools promoted values that directly contradicted those of their families (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Diez 2011). Beheran (2011), for example, found that teachers in public schools in Buenos Aires saw children of Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants as "a problem" due to their lack of "basic cultural norms" (p. 228). According to teachers, these cultural differences of immigrant students led not only to difficulties in their developing relationships with other students but also conflicted with their own teaching processes. Therefore, teachers would attribute immigrant students' issues in schools to their "deficient culture," a culture that teachers ultimately viewed as a combination of negative stereotypes of Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants. On the other hand, when discussing the school-related difficulties of native Argentine students of European heritage, teachers tended to seek more

individualized explanations, such as issues in the home that led to a lack of motivation of certain students, sometimes even highlighting how social inequality led some poor Argentine students to "no longer believe that studying will serve them" (p. 230).

Furthermore, in attempts to show support of diversity and multiculturalism, many teachers and administrators promoted multicultural ideas related to how "everyone is equal" (Galarza, 2012), but this created a number of difficulties for students of nondominant backgrounds, such as those of Latin American immigrant families. First, while this attempt at promoting equality may have been well intended, it denied the real cultural differences that exist between groups, effectively "silencing" immigrant students in schools (Beheran, 2011; Novaro, Borton, Diez, & Hecht, 2008). For instance, in Berehan's (2011) study, teachers stated they avoided drawing attention to their students as immigrants in order to "help them integrate and do better in school" (p. 229), essentially ignoring the cultural backgrounds of such students because they believed it would help them. Second, such superficial equality-related ideas overlooked the fact that schools themselves were products of the culture of the dominant group. Consequently, equality was only attained through assimilation to the school culture, which was ultimately the culture of the dominant group.

Critical Approaches to Education

> "If education alone cannot transform society, without it society cannot change either." (Freire, 2004, p. 47)

Critical pedagogy. While there are various ideas regarding ways to promote equitable learning environments for all students, many, such as multiculturalism, often fail to acknowledge the influence of power relations in contributing to the circumstances of

nondominant groups. However, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) argued that this imbalance of power, reinforced in classrooms, dehumanizes both oppressed groups and their oppressors. In order for the oppressed to liberate themselves, education must take a form in which all parties participate as both students and teachers simultaneously. Taking part in this process allows for students of oppressed groups to develop a critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, in which they are able to question their social realities, thus allowing them to recognize their oppression.

Freire's (1970) work laid the foundation for critical pedagogy, which has since been developed by a number of scholars. Although there are many approaches to critical pedagogy, most critical pedagogues aim to empower students, especially those of oppressed groups, and combat social injustices (McLaren, 1998). Though it is often mistakenly reduced solely to the encouraging of dialogue in the classroom (Macedo, 2004), critical pedagogy promotes an array of practices that reduce power imbalances between students and educators. This results in attempts to democratize classrooms, preparing students for similar democratic engagement in society (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Furthermore, many who support Frerian approaches to education work to create environments in which educators and the parents and communities of nondominant student populations communicate frequently, openly, and as equal parties, especially in decision-making processes (e.g., DeShera, 2012).

Family-school-community partnerships. A major issue discussed by education scholars has been that teachers and administrators tended to see the parents of students of nondominant groups as "uninvolved" in the education of their children (e.g., Baquedano-

López et al., 2013; Diez, 2011). However, as critical scholars have pointed out, the involvement of parents traditionally had been understood as participation in activities focused on the goals and expectations of schools (e.g., Delgado Gaitan, 2012; Eccles & Harold, 1996; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Lee & Bowen, 2006), ignoring any "involvement" that took place outside of the school or beyond the bounds of what was considered acceptable by the dominant culture. Therefore, school-centric understandings of involvement tended to stress the need for students and parents to conform to the traditional practices and procedures of schools, which placed more of a burden on families of nondominant backgrounds than those of the dominant group due to schools' orientation toward dominant practices and beliefs (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

As a result of the limitations of traditional definitions of parental involvement and their prioritization of forms of involvement that align primarily with the dominant group, some critical education scholars have sought to expand definitions of involvement to recognize other systems of belief in terms of how to support the educational achievement of children of nondominant groups. Though scholarly work related to the parental involvement among Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant communities in Argentina has been limited, the body of literature related to the experiences of Latin American immigrants in the United States has grown substantially and may be applicable in some cases. For instance, in his work, Andrews (2013) investigated how high school students of Mexican heritage residing in the United States perceived the involvement of their parents in their education, leaving the definition of involvement up the students. He found that despite the common

belief that Mexican immigrant parents were uninvolved in their children's education, students saw their parents as very much involved, though in ways that may not have been valued by schools; that is, their parents stressed deference for elders, good behavior, supervision of academic activity, and nurturance and moral support. According to Andrews (2013),

> These efforts would be considered deficient [in the United States] mostly because the parents who practice them are viewed as culturally deficient. If mainstream parents were to engage in the practices of parental involvement in which Mexican parents engage, these practices would be valued. (p. 506)

Not only can involvement look different across families, but families of nondominant backgrounds in particular may also possess a general capability of developing unique ways of supporting their children given their marginalization within society and in dealing with schools (e.g., Andrews, 2013; Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005). For example, Andrews (2013) highlighted that due to their family circumstances, the parents in his study were creative in their involvement, "trying different strategies that work best with the new educational system in spite of the limited resources at their disposal" (p. 506). However, traditional definitions of involvement failed to capture such activities because they deviated from the common practices of mainstream parents.

The building of capital. Schools' lack of recognition of the involvement of parents of nondominant groups in combination with their promotion of assimilation to dominant culture has had the potential to be devastating for nondominant student populations, as research has indicated the necessity for open relationships between families, schools, and communities for the promotion of the socioemotional development and academic achievement of students (e.g., Arriaza & Wagner, 2012; Auerbach, 2007; Baumann,

Rodríguez, & Parra-Cardona, 2011; Delgado Gaitan, 2012; DeShera, 2012; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Falicov, 2007). According to the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, "Students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school, and community work together to support students' learning and development" (Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p.87). However, the previously mentioned issues between schools and parents of nondominant groups often led to alienation among immigrant parents in particular (Auerback, 2007).

The building strong relationships between schools and nondominant families has been shown to produce benefits not only for individual students but for nondominant communities as a whole, as encouraging the development of the social networks of nondominant parents increases their social and cultural capital through the strengthening of relationships with parents of similar backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1986; Vega, Kolody, Valle, & Weir, 1991). For example, in their work focusing on building solidarity among parents of marginalized backgrounds in the United States, Arriaza and Wagner (2012) found "this kind of solidarity makes it possible for parents to exchange information, organize groups, and forge degrees of social capital" (p.159). Therefore, uniting parents of similar background provided support in developing strategies to address their concerns related to the education of their children, allowing for the continued improvement of the relationships between schools, individual families, and communities. The need for the (re)development of capital is especially relevant for immigrant families, such as those that have recently arrived in the receiving country. Even though such families may retain and/or reconfigure social networks from their home countries, it is also necessary that they build these networks in the receiving country, as migration results in a reduction of social and cultural capital due to relocation.

For new immigrants, community members, particularly those who have been in the receiving country for a longer period of time, may serve as valuable resources (Falicov, 2007), including within the school environment. The expansion of community networks, and therefore social and cultural capital, is necessary in order for parents and schools to work together in an equitable manner to provide optimal educational experiences for students of nondominant groups.

Overcoming home-school incongruences. Furthermore, many scholars have argued that positive relationships between schools, parents, and communities has the potential to help overcome incongruences between the home and school cultures of students of nondominant backgrounds. For instance, Auerback (2007) argued that educators should be "anticipating, understanding, and reducing sources of conflict in the home-school relationship, starting with removing barriers to access and communication and responding flexibly to advocacy efforts by/for marginalized families" (p. 278). However, the mindset with which school personnel approach interactions with parents of marginalized groups impacted the possibility of a secure relationship. Although they may have believed they did not view families in a negative light, the actions of school personnel still limited the participation of parents and emphasized their own knowledge and superiority. For instance, in her work on building relationships between Latino families and schools in the United States, DeShera (2012) saw that "it was difficult for school staff to actively listen rather than talk at the parents" (p.145). However, although there were a number of studies investigating the interactions of public school personnel and Latino students and families in the United

States, the perspectives of Argentine teachers toward Andean and Paraguayan immigrant students and families has been underexplored.

Contributions of This Study

In this study, I examined the predominant school personnel perspectives and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant families, taking into consideration the ways in which multiculturalism informed their consideration of race, class, and culture. Though multicultural education is often seen as a strategy for improving the educational experiences of all students, there is little understanding of the ways in which it may allow for the perpetuation of problematic ideology related to the subjugation of nondominant populations in educational contexts. Therefore, I explored their views of and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families, especially as they related to images of Latin American immigrants circulated throughout Argentine society.

In addition to considering common perspectives and approaches of school personnel, I also closely examined the perspectives of a subset of teachers engaged in critical education, taking into consideration their views on the school environment as well as Argentine society more broadly. Through critical education has developed greatly since the 1970s, the examination of its application in Latin American contexts has been underexplored, especially as it relates to race-related issues. In order to contribute to understandings of the use of critical education in Latin America, I also explored the approaches of critical educators in working with Latin American immigrant students and families, including their management of relationships with families and development of solutions to issues impacting Latin American immigrant students.

Moreover, this study contributed to the understanding of the intuitional reception not only of Latin Americans immigrants but of nondominant groups. Through the examination of the links between formal policy and informal policy that shaped what was actually happening on the ground in public schools in Buenos Aires, I examined the ways in which the superiority of whiteness was reinforced through these policies and the ways in which the schools' structure negatively impact Latin American immigrant students and families based on multiple factors related to race, class, and culture. Consequently, findings from this investigation may also be applicable to other nondominant groups, as well.

Furthermore, this study sought to understand the consequences of national, local, and school environments on students' understandings of their own positions within society. In studies on educational inequity, students themselves are rarely consulted, especially young children. However, this study expanded on existing knowledge regarding children of nondominant groups and their educational experiences by working with Latin American immigrant students directly to construct a clearer understanding of the complexities associated with living day-to-day in environments that are designed to uphold dominant cultural norms and the superiority of whiteness.

III. Methods

This research was carried out as a 15-month ethnographic, comparative study of two public primary schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 2014-2016. I employed multiple data collection methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and photo-elicitation interviews. Utilizing a variety of methods and working with participant of distinct backgrounds and roles allowed for access to a variety of perspectives regarding the relationship between Latin American immigrant groups and public schools, as well as the triangulation of findings.

Research Sites

The neighborhood. My research was carried out in a lower- and middle- class neighborhood on the edge the City of Buenos Aires. The area was known for its large population of Bolivian immigrants, but there were also many Peruvian and Paraguayan immigrants in the area, as well. Historically, however, the neighborhood was made up primarily of European immigrants and their families, and as the population of the area had shifted, the neighborhood had become highly segregated. At the time of data collection, there was a clear difference between sectors of the neighborhood occupied by Argentine natives of European heritage and those in which primarily Andean and Paraguayan immigrants and their families carried out their daily activities. While the streets closest to the *La Avenida*, a major highway delineating the limits of the city, tended to be filled with food and clothing vendors and pedestrians of Latin American immigrant backgrounds, just a few blocks further from the highway there were no longer any street vendors and the majority of storeowners were of European descent.

The location of the concentration of Latin American immigrant groups was in part related to the highly politicized nature of the *La Avenida*. *Porteños*, as those living in the City of Buenos Aires were called, make a point of distinguishing between that which was located within the city limits and anything located beyond the *La Avenida*, an area which was referred to as *Provincia*. While there were some exceptions, living in *Provincia* was generally looked down upon, as the infrastructure generally was not maintained at the same level as within *Capital* (the City of Buenos Aires), poverty rates tended to be higher, and the quality of public services such as education was considered lower. Many Latin American immigrants in this area lived outside of the city in *Provincia* but work within *Capital*; while the cost of living was significantly lower outside of the city, employment opportunities were limited, leading many *Provincia* residents to commute into the city to work. Those that commuted for work or lived near the *La Avenida* also often enrolled their children in schools within the city limits, affording them access to higher quality education and more resources, such as a laptop computer that is provided to all public school students in *Capital*. Public school students in *Provincia* also receive a laptop computer but not until entering secondary school.

The schools. The two schools in which this research took place were located only a few blocks from the *La Avenida*, and they straddled this unofficial Andean-European division of the neighborhood. *Escuela Andina* was located within a block of the *La Avenida*, and *Escuela Europea* was located two blocks further into the city.

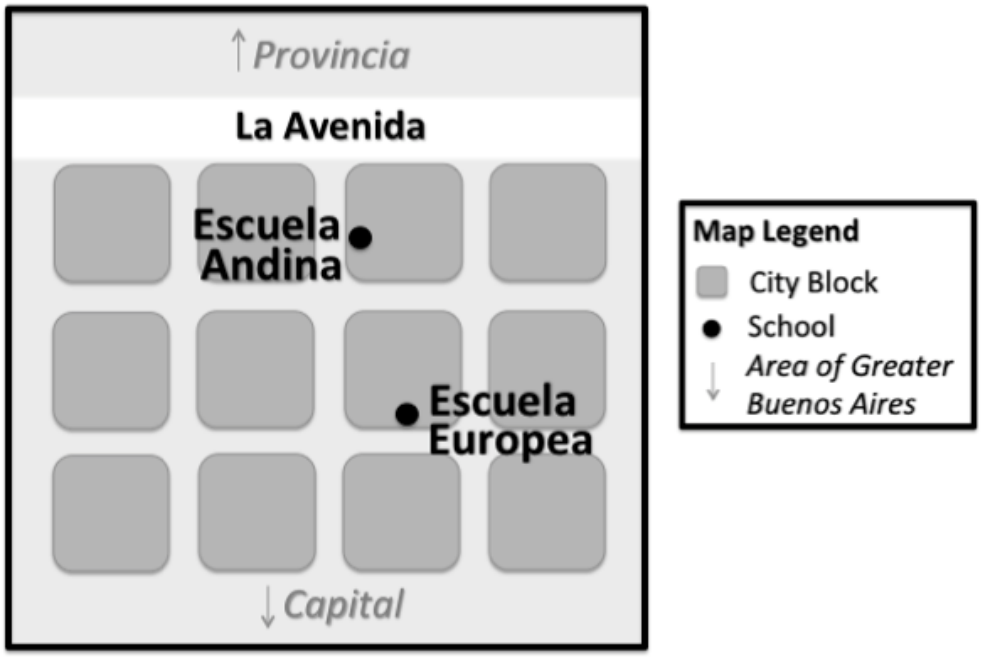


Figure 3.1. Map of the neighborhood of *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*.

Both were public primary schools in the same school district and served grades 1 to 7. They were relatively small with between, on average, 1-3 classes of about 20 students per grade level. However, *Escuela Andina* had a larger student population overall due to its having distinct morning and afternoon groups of students. The administrations, staff, and teaching personnel of both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* were comprised primarily of white, native Argentine women.

Despite these basic similarities, the schools were different in several important ways. First, the schools operated on different schedules. One of the schools, *Escuela Europea*, was in session from 8:15 am to 4:20 pm with the same students the entire day (referred to as a *jornada completa*, or a full schedule). The other school, *Escuela Andina*, had a morning group of students from 8 am to 12:15 pm and an afternoon group from 1 pm to 5:15 pm

(referred to as a *jornada simple*, or a simple schedule). While some of the school personnel worked both shifts of the school day at *Escuela Andina*, others worked either worked part-time or worked one shift at *Escuela Andina* and another at a different school or job during the other shift. Both types of schools were common in the City of Buenos Aires, with 260 public schools operating under a *jornada completa* and 192 using a *jornada simple* as of 2015. Although parents were able to choose which type of school their children attended, schools gave priority to certain potential students, such as those that already had siblings attending the school and those living within 10 blocks of the school (Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2015). Even though they were expected to cover the same basic material regardless of the type of schedule they operated, schools that had a *jornada completa* tended to be thought of as "better" schools.

Another difference between the two schools was the populations they served. Although both schools tended to enroll students of middle and lower-class backgrounds due to their location and the fact that they were public schools, the national and racial compositions of the schools' student bodies were noticeably different. That is, *Escuela Andina*, the school with a *jornada simple* that was located closest to the *La Avenida*, had a student population of 83.4% first- or second-generation immigrant students of Bolivia, Peru, or Paraguay and 15.2% native-born Argentine students of Argentine parents, while *Escuela Europea* had a student population that was made of 32.9% first- or second-generation immigrant students of Bolivia, Peru, or Paraguay and 66.7% native-born Argentine students of Argentine parents. In terms of the racial composition of the student bodies, nearly all

Latin American immigrant students were recognizably of indigenous heritage compared to native Argentine students who were recognizably of European heritage.

Table 3.1

Birthplaces of Students' Parents by School

Country	*Escuela Europea*	*Escuela Andina*
Bolivia	16.9%	73.7%
Peru	9.9%	4.6%
Paraguay	6.1%	5.1%
Argentina	66.7%	15.2%
Other/Unreported	0.5%	1.4%

Source: School records.

These two schools were chosen as research sites based on the recommendation of a high-ranking member of the district administration for their location in what was considered a Latin American immigrant enclave of the City of Buenos Aires. While the student population of the school district as a whole was made up of a large number of first- and second-generation Latin American immigrant students compared to wealthier districts, these two schools in particular were seen as being especially strong in their celebration of cultural diversity by the district administration. They also had fewer safety concerns within the schools and the surrounding neighborhood than some of the others in the district located in underserved and under-resourced areas.

Participants

Participants in this study included school personnel, students, and the families of students at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*.

School personnel. School personnel at both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* were mostly women of European descent, though there was a small number of men of European descent working at the schools, as well. Only one member of the school personnel

at either school openly identified as indigenous. The ages of school personnel ranged from early-20s to mid-60s. While there were some teachers and administrators who were relatively new to working in public schools, most of the school personnel had 10 or more years of experience working in public education in some capacity. Compensation for school personnel in the City of Buenos Aires generally placed them in the middle- to lower-middle class of Argentine society.

Students. Although I interacted with students of a range of backgrounds in various grade levels, at both schools I spent the majority of my time with 5th grade students. At *Escuela Europea*, this consisted of two classes of 5th grade students, while at *Escuela Andina*, only one 5th grade class existed during the shift in which I carried out my fieldwork. Most of these students were between 9 and 10 years of age, though there were a few students that were a year or two older as a result of being placed in a lower grade level after immigrating or being considered as having behavioral or academic difficulties. The majority of students had been enrolled in their schools for at least a few years, though at *Escuela Europea* a large number of students had been in the school since beginning 1st grade. This was not as common at *Escuela Andina*, as its student population was comprised of a higher number of immigrant students whose families had moved recently from surrounding Latin American countries or occasionally moved between surrounding countries and Argentina.

In terms of nationality, at *Escuela Europea*, 39.6% of 5th grade students were first- or second-generation immigrants from Bolivia, Peru, or Paraguay, and 60.5% of students were born to Argentine parents (see Table 3.2). Nevertheless, 93% of students themselves had been born in Argentina, and only 7.0% had been born in Bolivia or Peru (4.7% and 2.3%,

respectively) (see Table 3.3). At *Escuela Andina*, 76.2% of 5th grade students of the shift I worked with were first- or second-generation immigrants, all from Bolivia, and 19.1% had parents who had been born in Argentina. Of these students, 66.7% were born in Argentina, and 33.3% were born in Bolivia. At both schools, the 5th grade students were fairly representative of their schools in relation to birthplace and immigrant generation, though *Escuela Andina* was comprised of a higher percentage of students of Paraguayan and Peruvian families than the 5th grade class involved in this research.

Table 3.2

Birthplaces of Parents of 5th Grade Students by School

Country	*Escuela Europea*	*Escuela Andina*
Bolivia	16.3%	76.2%
Peru	14.0%	0.0%
Paraguay	9.3%	0.0%
Argentina	60.5%	19.1%
Other/Unreported	0.0%	4.8%

Source: School records.

Table 3.3

Birthplaces of 5th Grade Students by School

Nationality	*Escuela Europea*	*Escuela Andina*
Bolivia	4.7%	33.3%
Peru	2.3%	0%
Paraguay	0%	0%
Argentina	93.0%	66.7%
Other/Unreported	0.0%	4.8%

Source: School records.

Families of students. While the families of students were not formally interviewed for this project, their interactions with school personnel nonetheless had a strong impact on my understanding of the relationship between the Argentine state and Latin American

immigrant groups in Buenos Aires. Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I was able to observe Latin American immigrant families as well as native Argentine families of European descent as they navigated the public school system during parent-teacher meetings, school-sponsored events, and while dropping their children off or picked them up from school, allowing me to see similarities and differences in their experiences based on their backgrounds. Additionally, I was able to have many informal conversations with parents during these activities, as well as outside of the school around the neighborhood. Consequently, the perspectives and experiences they shared with me are woven into the findings of this work where applicable.

Data Collection Methods

Participant observation. I observed in each of the two schools approximately two days a week during the 2015 academic year. Each observation lasted around 3-4 hours, and I observed students during mathematics, literature, science, and social science lessons with their main teachers as well as with other school personnel during physical education, music, art, technology, and foreign language instruction. In addition to observing during class time, I was also present during *recreo* (recess) between classes and while students waited for their classes to start at the beginning of their school day, allowing me more time to interact with students. Furthermore, I attended activities to which parents were explicitly invited such as parent-teacher meetings and school-sponsored events in order to observe interactions between school personnel and families directly, as well as meet some of the parents of the children who attended the schools. I also chaperoned several fieldtrips, which provided me with the opportunity to interact with students, school personnel, and parents in a more casual

environment. I documented the interactions I observed through fieldnotes and occasionally with photos.

During observations, I focused on moments that shed light on the relationship between school personnel and immigrant families, such as how school personnel viewed the families of students, how students perceived the relationship between their families and the school, how the school and the families communicated with one another, and what attempts either made at having more direct interactions. I also looked for moments related to the relationships between school personnel and Latin American immigrant students, such as school personnel approaches toward disciplining students of distinct backgrounds and the inclusion (or exclusion) of students within the schools. The beginning of the school day provided an ideal opportunity to observe these moments, as teachers often discussed students' *cuadernos de comunicado* (communication notebooks) that were used to send information home to families regarding school-related concerns. Nonetheless, there were several other moments that occurred later in the school day that provided insight into the relationship between the schools and Latin American immigrant students and families, such as moments of conflict between students and issues that school personnel felt needed to be addressed urgently by contacting students' parents. Therefore, due to the unpredictability of when such discussions would arise, I conducted observations at varying times of the day.

Interviews with school personnel. In total, I formally interview 13 school personnel for this study, including teachers of core subjects like mathematics and literature, librarians, school administrators, and instructors of courses such as art and technology. All interviews were carried out in Spanish and were audio-recorded. I conducted the majority of interviews

in cafes located in the neighborhood where the schools were located, though a few interviews were conducted in the schools or in the homes of school personnel.

School personnel were recruited for participation for interviews through informal conversations, though in a few instances, the teachers that were being observed assisted in recruiting other school personnel for interviews, especially at the beginning stages of the recruitment process. As the school year progressed, I was able to develop relationships with school personnel of distinct political stances and educational approaches, allowing for a wider range of school personnel perspectives to be included in this study. I also made a point of recruiting school personnel with varying levels of experience working in public education.

Interviews consisted of questions related to communication between parents and schools, parental involvement, school personnel preparation for working with students and families of Latin American immigrant backgrounds, and the schools' involvement in the community (see Appendix). We also discussed the neighborhood in which the school was located, the social environment in the school, and their perceptions of the experiences Latin American immigrant groups in Argentina. While the objective was to understand their perspectives on working with Andean and Paraguayan immigrant students and families specifically, we also discussed students in the school in general so that any differences related to the race or nationality of students would be made more apparent.

Photo-elicitation interviews with students. Of the 5th grade classrooms I observed, 48 students participated in photo-elicitation interviews,[10] with about half of the students being of Latin American immigrant families of indigenous heritage and the other half being of white, native Argentine families of European descent. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and were audio-recorded. Though the exact location of the interviews changed depending on the availability of unoccupied rooms, all of the interviews took place somewhere within the schools and away from other students and school personnel. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. All student interviews were carried out in the last three months of the school year to allow for the development of rapport with students during the first six months of the academic year.

The photo-elicitation interviews were developed based on photo-projects I arranged for all 5th grade students in collaboration with the teachers of the classrooms in which I was observing. In total, 58 students participated in the projects (20 at *Escuela Andina* and 38 at *Escuela Europea*). After an initial meeting with parents to gain consent for the project, all students whose parents agreed[11] were given a disposable camera and approximately two weeks to take photos representing their heritage and identity. The photo projects themselves took shape differently at the two schools based on the teachers' curriculum plans and student interests: at *Escuela Andina*, students created short videos of their photos accompanied music they performed and quotations from autobiographies they wrote, and at *Escuela*

[10] Photo-elicitation interviews are interviews in which photos, provided by either the participant or the researcher, are utilized. They may serve a variety of purposes, such as to prime the participant for discussing specific themes or to develop rapport.
[11] The parents of two students did not provide consent for their children to participate in the photo projects.

Europea students made poster boards with their photos and wrote photo captions that described how the photos were related to their heritage. All students were also given a CD with digital copies of their photos to share with their families.

During the photo-elicitation interviews, students and I used their photos to discuss their social identities, lives outside of school, and experiences related to culture and race with classmates and school personnel (see Appendix). For those that were first- or second-generation Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants, we also discussed their families' migrations to Argentina and their families' current relationships with their native countries.

Data Analysis

Initial analyses. Initial analyses began during data collection, as emergent themes influenced future data collection and analyses in a recursive process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For instance, school personnel and student interview guides were developed based on not only relevant literature and theory, but also themes that arose during school observations. Emergent themes during observations also impacted my focus during future observations. I documented emergent themes and early analyses in research memos.

Transcription of interviews and fieldnotes. Interviews and fieldnotes collected for this project were purposefully transcribed (Gibbs, 2008), all in the language in which they originally occurred. Therefore, a native Spanish-speaking research assistant or I transcribed interviews in Spanish, and I transcribed fieldnotes in a mixture of English in Spanish. Transcripts of interviews and fieldnotes were coded while written in the language in which they occurred, as well. Finally, I translated Spanish-language portions of interviews and

fieldnotes selected for inclusion in the presentation of this study into English, and these translations were confirmed by a speaker of both Spanish and English to ensure accuracy.

Coding of interviews, fieldnotes, and artifacts. During data analysis, I utilized a process of open coding to examine interviews, fieldnotes, and artifacts based on both deductive and inductive codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), allowing for data sources to be examined for common patterns and themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Both deductive and inductive codes, as well as subsequent sub-codes, were derived from relevant theory and literature as well as emergent themes (see Table 3.4). Deductive codes derived from relevant theory and literature included themes such as "biases," "family-school interactions," "collaboration," and "community concerns." Inductive codes, which arose in the field and throughout data analysis, included themes such as "communication notebooks," which were the primary form of communication between the school and families; "school personnel working conditions," which became increasingly relevant in understanding the realities and perspectives of school personnel; and "physical conditions of facilities," which greatly impacted the educational experiences of students, their families, and school personnel as a result of the frequency at which the school buildings were unsuitable for use.

Table 3.4

Coding Scheme

Codes	Sub-codes Level I	Sub-codes Level II
Barriers	School Personnel Working Conditions	
	Physical Conditions of Facilities	
	Policy	Formal
		Informal
		Origin Unclear
Biases	Race-related	

	Class-related	
	Culture-related	
Family-School Interactions	Parental Involvement	
	Communication	
Critical Approaches	Collaboration	Fellow School Personnel
		Students
		Families
	Dialogue	
	Development of Critical Consciousness	
Community Concerns	School-related	
	Family-related	
	Other	

Trustworthiness

I took several steps during the study design, data collection, and analysis to ensure the trustworthiness of this investigation (Moschkovich & Brenner, 2000). First, in order to maximize the applicability of research to other contexts, I developed a multi-site design that included purposefully selected schools located in a neighborhood undergoing demographic shifts as a result of Latin American immigration (i.e., transferability). Furthermore, during data collection, I engaged with my research sites over the course of an entire academic year on a consistent basis (i.e., prolonged engagement and persistent observation), and I recorded all interviews and kept detailed fieldnotes in order to be able to represent the schools and participants as accurately as possible (i.e., dependability). For this same reason, I also analyzed all data prior to their being translated to English to minimize the influence of translation on the content. During the analysis phase, which began even during data collection, I also generated research memos to track my thinking about the themes discussed in this work (i.e., an audit trail), and I occasionally debriefed with colleagues regarding the advancements of my analyses in relation to the data (i.e., peer debriefing).

About the Researcher

In ethnographic research, background characteristics of the researcher have the potential to impact interactions with participants within research sites. In my case, there were a few characteristics that I found to have an especially prominent impact on my interactions with research participants and my subsequent analyses, including my race, nationality, Spanish-language skills, and interest in the treatment of immigrant communities.

First, my position as a white woman doing research on immigration and diversity in Argentina should be addressed. As a white person, Argentines of European descent often shared information with me one-on-one that was not shared when anyone of indigenous heritage was present. That being said, many of the statements school personnel made to me about immigrant students and families would rarely be said directly to anyone not viewed as white, regardless of their nationality. During these conversations, these individuals often made gestures or altered their tone as if I would relate to what they were suggesting as a fellow white person, and the topic was quickly changed if anyone seeming to be of Bolivian, Peruvian, or Paraguayan heritage came within hearing distance. On the other hand, my being white also appeared to create a barrier between Latin American immigrant parents and myself, as it connected me to the schools and school personnel. While in some cases this was overcome in time, in others it resulted in parents being reserved and guarded in my presence as they were with school personnel. Nonetheless, my relationships with Latin American immigrant parents with whom I had more regular contacted allowed me to better understand their experiences in working with school personnel.

Furthermore, as an American living in Latin America, I was seen as an outsider. Criticism of the imperialistic history of U.S. involvement in Latin America was strong in Argentina, especially in Buenos Aires, and left-leaning *porteños*, or residents of the city, were often open about their negative opinions of the United States. While this influenced my initial interactions with *porteños*, over time my personal criticisms of U.S. involvement in the region as well as high level of Spanish proficiency and extended time living in Latin America tended to reduce the social distance my being American generated.

Finally, throughout my fieldwork, I was asked a countless number of times how someone from my background came to do this kind of research. Though I did not initiate conversations regarding my personal views, during moments when school personnel asked me directly, I did not hide my interest in protecting the rights of Latin American immigrant populations. Consequently, on a few occasions, I noticed school personnel attempting to align with my views. However, through prolonged engagement and the building of rapport with participants, most opened up about their perspectives regarding Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant populations in Argentina.

IV: Predominant School Personnel Perspectives and Approaches to Working with Latin American Immigrant Students and Families

Over the course of the year I spent at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, I was able to interview and observe school personnel from a range of grade levels, disciplines, socioeconomic backgrounds, and political stances. While each participant held his or her own unique beliefs, common perceptions of Latin American immigrants became evident among school personnel, often mirroring discriminatory views found throughout Argentine society. When speaking to them directly, school personnel at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* expressed a deep affection for all students in their schools. However, school personnel's perceptions of Latin American immigrants often negatively impacted their approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students' families, as well as influencing the relationships between the students themselves. In this chapter, I explore these prevailing school personnel perspectives of and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families through a combination of student and school personnel interviews, as well as observations carried out within schools.

Promotion of Multiculturalism in Schools

Working with "diversity." In the weeks leading up to the academic year, I met with several school personnel throughout the district to organize the logistics of my fieldwork, including selecting the schools in which I would be working and meeting with local administrators and other school personnel. I was encouraged to work in the schools involved in this investigation by a high-ranking district administrator, so there was some suspicion at the local level as to why their schools were chosen. Even though I explained my project and

that their schools were chosen as a result of the composition of their student bodies, school personnel were careful to monitor what they said during these meetings. Consequently, while they served a practical purpose for my research, these initial meetings also gave me a glimpse into the image that the schools wanted to portray of themselves.

Multiculturalism was at the center of several of these conversations, with school personnel telling me about their student populations, the changes that have taken place in the neighborhood, and the types of events they did related to "diversity." School personnel spoke with pride about *feria de platos*, events in which parents bring dishes from home to share or sell as a fundraiser for the school; *actos*, or school plays, that they organized for students to perform for their families and other students; and other occasional school events such as talks by guest speakers.

Figure 4.1 Food prepared by parents for students, families, and school personnel to share at a *feria de platos* event at *Escuela Andina*. Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 19 October 2015.

However, discussions regarding diversity among their student populations, rarely went beyond visible elements of culture, such as traditional food, dance, and holidays.

> El profesorado te enseña trabajar con la diversidad, pero uno en el práctico, en lo cotidiano, ir conociendo el origen de cada familia. Y a mí me gusta mucho trabajar por ejemplo el día de la tradición o el día de las fiestas tradicionales, de los costumbres [*sic*]. O a ver, este proyecto que vamos a hacer ahora de Carnaval y ver, ¿qué costumbres tienen? Entonces allí es donde despertás el interés con los niños que tiene culturas diferentes. Y allí ellos se sienten mejor porque pueden participar. Si no, es que si vos solo hablás de la historia de Argentina, el niño que es hijo de papás que no son argentinos desconocen, y no participan. A lo mejor no les gusta porque no lo conocen. Entonces es tarea del docente trabajar con la diversidad para que todos se sientan bien.
>
> The job teaches you how to work with diversity, but in the practice of it, in the day-to-day, you go on learning the origins of each family. And I really like to teach about, for example, a day of tradition or a day of traditional festivities or customs. Or like this project we are doing with *Carnaval* to see, what different customs do they have? So that's where you spark the interest of kids from different cultures. And then they feel better because they can participate. If not, if you just talk about the history of Argentina, the kid that is the child of parents that aren't Argentine don't know it, and they don't participate. Maybe they don't like it because they don't know it. So it's the job of the teacher to work with diversity so that everyone feels good. (School Personnel 4)

As in the previous excerpt, school personnel generally saw little need for training in working with nondominant populations such as Latin American immigrant students, as they believed they were already learning how to work with diverse populations by being in diverse schools. However, school personnel still tended to treat the dominant culture as the norm, with the word "diversity" being used to describe anyone or anything not of European origin, which typically meant Bolivian, Peruvian, or Paraguayan in this context.

"Somos todos iguales." In both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, school personnel often promoted multicultural rhetoric based on the premise of all people being

equal before the state regardless of their background. This was often linked to everyone having the same rights and opportunities, as in the following example:

> En el aula somos todos iguales, y todos tienen los mismos, las mismas posibilidades y el mismo derecho de aprender que todos. Hay que interactuar con todos de la misma manera.
>
> In the classroom we are all equal, and we all have the same possibilities and the same right to learn. You have to interact with everyone in the same way. (School Personnel 8)

Because everyone was guaranteed the same educational rights and opportunities by law, many school personnel described their roles in working with students under the same terms: as long as they treated everyone the "same," they were promoting the fair treatment of Latin American immigrant students. For many teachers, this seemed to be the most secure way to ensure that students did not feel they were being excluded or singled out in schools. However, because of schools' orientation toward the dominant culture, the schools' stance on treating everyone the same often meant ignoring the backgrounds of students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families.

Although many school personnel outwardly supported the idea of treating all students the same by not explicitly drawing attention to their being of Latin American immigrant backgrounds, their response to my being present in the schools suggested that on some level, school personnel also believed they *should* be talking about diversity but were perhaps unsure of how to go about it. For instance, over the course of the school year, both schools held several events related to cultural diversity in general, but at *Escuela Europea* in particular, school personnel often appeared uncomfortable and unsure of what terminology to use when talking about Latin American immigrant populations and other nondominant

groups. Though I suspected the inexperience of school personnel in exploring with these topics, this was not confirmed until I began interviewing students.

Jaycee (J):[12] En la escuela, ¿ustedes hablan mucho de la cultura y de las familias o no tanto?	J: Do you all talk much about culture and [your] families at school or not really?
Student 25 (S25): Más o menos.	S: More or less.
J: ¿Sí? ¿Y cuándo hablan de esas cosas?	J: Yeah? And when do you talk about those things?
S25: (Riéndose) Cuando llegaste empezamos hablar de todo, y nada más.	S: (Laughing) When you arrived we started talking about all of that, and that's it.

Like this student, nearly all of the other 47 students interviewed for this research confirmed that prior to my arrival in the schools, school personnel rarely openly discussed cultural diversity or the families of students.

Denial of issues of racial discrimination. The reduction of diversity to visible forms of culture in combination with the schools' approaching equity-based issues by treating everyone the same appeared to lead many school personnel to believe there was no discrimination in their schools. In some cases, they believed their rarely seeing conflicts between students based on explicitly discriminatory attitudes was evidence that this was not an issue for their student populations.

> Por suerte, no he notado en la escuela lo de discriminar…No es algo que pasa frecuentemente. No lo he visto. No es un tema que tengamos que abordar. Los docentes trabajan ese tema de la comprensión, la aceptación. Porque no, realmente está como, como establecido. Los chicos se mezclan de distintas culturas y nacionalidades, y vivimos en toda una harmonía. Es lo que veo.
>
> Luckily, I haven't noticed discrimination in the school…It's not something that happens frequently. I haven't seen it. It's not a theme that we have to tackle. The

[12] From this point forward, statements from the author are prefaced with "J," from students with "S#," and from school personnel with "SP#" in transcripts.

> teachers teach understanding, acceptance. Because it's not really, like, established. The kids intermingle with [others of] different cultures and nationalities, and we live in complete harmony. That's what I see. (School Personnel 8)

Because conflicts based on culture or nationality were not brought to their attention, many school personnel did not believe they needed to talk about discrimination against nondominant populations. Instead, as this teacher highlighted, talking about cultural understanding and acceptance was seen as sufficient to support their diverse student populations, though this also rarely occurred.

Though school personnel would talk about culture and nationality during our conversations about diversity, race was either completely ignored or discussed from a defensive standpoint. School personnel, especially at the level of the administration, seemed concerned about being perceived as "racist." In one meeting in particular, the participant was insistent on deflecting any potential discussion of race, though I had not mentioned it at all.

> No tenemos problemas con el color de piel. No tenemos ningún problema con el racismo en esta escuela.
>
> We don't have problems with skin color. We don't have any problem with racism in this school. (School Personnel 13)

This statement demonstrated a pattern I found common among school personnel: there was a firm denial of the existence of race-related issues within the schools, and race was reduced solely to skin color.

The reduction of race to skin color served to defend the schools as not having conflicts related to race, especially when a student's country of origin or cultural heritage was used during conflicts in place of a direct reference to skin color. Take the following

statement for example, in which a teacher discussed what differences they saw between the experiences of students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families and students of European descent:

> Yo no noto [diferencias] porque en esta escuela [cuando] los chicos tengan conflictos es porque sean de distintas nacionalidades. En principio ellos se juegan entre ellos. No hay problemas. No hay picas. A veces pasa, a veces surge alguna cosa con algunos. A veces surge con alguna cosa en algún colegio, o que se dicen "paraguayo" o se dicen "boliviano" [como insulto]. En general las maestras tratan de que eso no pase.
>
> I don't see [differences] because in this school [when] the kids have conflict it's because they are of different nationalities. They play with one another. There aren't problems. There aren't fights. Sometimes something comes up with some of them. Sometimes something comes up in a school, or someone says "Paraguayan" or "Bolivian" [as an insult]. In general the teachers try to keep this from happening. (School Personnel 9)

Here the teacher explained that they do not have race-related issues in the school because the conflicts are driven instead by students' nationalities. Nonetheless, terms such as "Bolivian," "Paraguayan," and "Peruvian" were used only toward students of indigenous origins, and even students of Latin American immigrant families that had been born in Argentina were the targets of such discriminatory language.

> En mi aula, hay una chica…que todos la burlaban porque era nueva y era tímida, y de repente un día estaban así, estaban burlando y todo eso, y la burlaban porque era peruana. Ella se sentía mal. Se quería ir. Estaba triste.
>
> In my class, there is a girl…that everyone made fun of because she was new and she was shy, and suddenly one day they were making fun of her and all of that, and they made fun of her because she was Peruvian. She felt bad. She wanted to leave. She was sad. (Student 28)

In the previous example, a white student explained how a new student was picked on for a variety of reasons, including because she was Peruvian. However, though the student was of

a Peruvian immigrant family, she was in fact born in Argentina, suggesting some conflation of race, nationality, and cultural heritage.

Though school personnel often struggled to see the conflation of race, nationality, and culture present in many of these conflicts between students, interviews with students revealed that many of them were much more aware of, or at least open about, the connection.

> En primero me pasó antes con los chicos de [otro grado]…Me decían "boliviano" [como insulto] porque tengo la piel negra y todo.
>
> It happened to me in first grade with kids from another grade…They called me "Bolivian" [as an insult] because I have dark skin and everything. (Student 32)

As seen in this statement by a student of a Latin American immigrant family, he saw the insults of other students as being related to his skin color even though they likely would have been classified as being related solely to nationality or culture by many school personnel. This simplification of race and the use of culture or national origin to obscure the severity of such insults resulted in these occurrences being treated as isolated, child-like squabbles by school personnel.

Racial conflict between students. Even based on this simplistic view of race as only relating to skin color, conflicts derived explicitly from notions of the superiority of whiteness did occur in these schools, though it was primarily students who would openly talk about these issues. One such reoccurring theme at *Escuela Europea* in particular was white students using racial slurs toward students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families.

> Por ejemplo, a [Student 47] a veces le dicen "negro" y eso. Es que, [Student 42] había dicho "pancho quemado" a [él] en ese conflicto.

> For example, sometimes they call [Student 47] "black" and things like that [as an insult]. In that conflict, [Student 42] had called him "a burnt hotdog." (Student 26)

In the conflict described in the previous example, a white student had used an insult based on the skin color of a student of a Bolivian immigrant family in a conflict. As this student mentioned, the referencing to students of indigenous backgrounds as "black" or other race-related terms happened on occasion in the school.

Furthermore, in some instances, the physical appearance, especially skin color, of students of Latin American immigrant families was used to position them as outside of the Argentine national identity, even in cases where students had been born in Argentina.

J: Acá en la escuela, ¿hay conflictos entre los chicos sobre quien nació en Argentina, quien nació en Bolivia, cosas así?	J: Here in the school, are there conflicts between kids about who was born in Argentina, who was born in Bolivia, or things like that?
S9: Ah, [estaba caminando] con un compañero y nos dijo si éramos blanco, éramos de [Argentina]. Si éramos de otro color éramos de Bolivia y todo eso. Y nosotros nos sentíamos mal porque ellos decían que nosotros no éramos de la raíz [argentina]…	S9: Ah, [I was walking] with a classmate and they said if we were white, we were from [Argentina]. If we are of another color we were from Bolivia and all of that. And we felt bad because they said that we weren't of [Argentine] origin…
J: Entonces básicamente, ¿no reconocieron que sos argentina por el color de tu piel?	J: So basically, they didn't acknowledge that you are Argentine because of your skin color?
S9: (Asiente que sí)	S9: (Nods yes)

Here a student of a Latin American immigrant family explained how her skin color was used by white students as a way to position her as an outsider, denying she could be Argentine because she was of indigenous heritage. Though these moments of explicit discrimination were not an everyday occurrence, multiple students of Latin American immigrant families

mentioned having at least one similar experience at school, even at *Escuela Andina* where students of Latin American immigrant families represented the majority of the student population.

Minimal response to conflicts rooted in white supremacy. Though racial conflicts occurred in the schools, school personnel addressed these moments with noticeably less attention than they did other occurrences that necessitated some form of disciplinary response. For instance, while forgetting to bring their school materials could result in students being reprimanded in front of the class or having their parents called, especially for students of Latin American immigrant families, using racist insults involved at most a quick chat between students and school personnel. Such instances of explicit racial prejudice often were explained away by citing the fault of all students involved in the conflict, even the one that received the insult. For instance, in the follow example, a student of a Latin American immigrant family described how school personnel reprimanded him in comparison to white Argentine students with whom he regularly had conflicts. Though the white students oftentimes used racial slurs to insult him, they received little punishment.

J: ¿Piensas que te trata [el personal de la escuela] como los demás? ¿O no?	J: Do you think [school personnel] treat you like everyone else? Or no?
S47: No, a veces le da paso a [otros chicos]. Ósea, los dejan hablar…Me contaron [otros estudiantes] hace mucho tiempo en cuarto grado, lo que pasó en dirección, a mí me retó más que todos…Me dijo, "Solamente dijo, 'Chicos, no hablan eso.' Nada más"…No le retó ni nada…¡Y a mí me retó un montón!	S47: No, sometimes they favor [other kids]. Like, they let them talk…[Other students] told me a long time ago in fourth grade, with what happened in the administrator's office, they got on to me more than everyone else…He told me, "They only said, 'Kids, don't talk like that.' Nothing else"…They didn't get on to him or anything…And they got on to me a lot!

Here the student explained how even the white students with whom he regularly had

conflicts saw the difference in the school's response to them compared to him, and on multiple occasions they used this to their advantage to get away with continuing to harass him using racist insults.

This lack of disciplinary action was common in conflicts involving race-related issues, as any attention to the discriminatory basis of these conflicts was diverted as much as possible. Oftentimes, they were not discussed with students at all.

J: ¿Ves muchos conflictos entre los chicos por diferencias de cultura, o raza, o nacionalidad?	J: Do you see a lot of conflict between kids because of cultural, racial, or national differences?
S27: Un poco, sí un poco pero ya a unos de ellos los defiendo porque no hay que decir esas cosas porque todos somos iguales.	S27: A little, yeah a little but I have defended some of them because those things shouldn't be said because we are all equal.
J: ¿Me podés dar un ejemplo de algo que ha pasado?	J: Can you give me an example of something that has happened?
S27: Como, viste, [Student 1] estaba acá desde segundo grado, y siempre…los chicos la molestaban y le decían "boliviana" y "negra." Eso. Hablaban así. Y yo la defendía porque a ella también la quiero mucho…	S27: Like, [Student 1] has been here since second grade, and the kids always bothered her and called her "Bolivian" and "black." That. They talked like that. And I defended her because I care for her a lot…
J: Y cuando esas cosas pasan, como eso con [Student 1], ¿qué hacen las maestras?	J: And when those things happen, like that with [Student 1], what do the teachers do?
S27: Lo resolvemos.	S27: We resolve it.
J: ¿Entre ustedes?	J: Between yourselves?
S27: Sí.	S27: Yeah.
J: ¿Entonces a veces no hacen nada las maestras?	J: So sometimes the teachers don't do anything?
S27: No, a veces nos quedamos muchos días peleados hasta que nos resolvamos.	S27: No, sometimes we go on many days fighting until we resolve it.

As this student explained, teachers often left it to students to work out their conflicts, even in moments when Latin American immigrant students were being targeted for their being dark-skinned and of indigenous heritage.

Perceptions of Latin American Immigrants among School Personnel

The schools' promotion of superficial multicultural rhetoric, lack of acknowledgement of discriminatory attitudes present among school personnel and students, and minimal response to race-related conflicts in appeared to be linked to the prevalence of negative perceptions of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families among school personnel.

Demographic shifts and belonging. In the part of the neighborhood in which the schools were located, the number of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants and their families had been growing slowly for quite some time. Several school personnel had worked in the area for many years, and almost all of them mentioned this shift in the demographics of the neighborhood and the subsequent changes in the composition of the student populations at their schools. However, their tone when discussing the shift varied, with some being less accepting of the demographic changes than others.

> Hace quince años, no era lo que es ahora, ni la escuela, ni el barrio, ni—ni nada. No, ósea, era una escuela de clase media, gente trabajadora. Principalmente argentinos. Habían pocos extranjeros. *Muy pocos*…Dos o tres nenes por grado, *nada más*…Ósea, normal, ¿no? Después, bueno, empezó a ver la gran *inmigración,* ¿no?, de Bolivia, de Perú, y Paraguay, y empezaron a venir todos *acá*. Entonces los argentinos empezaron a ir.
>
> Fifteen years ago, it wasn't what it is now, not the school, not the neighborhood—not anything. No, it was a school of the middle class, working people. Mainly Argentines. There were very few foreigners. *Very few*...Two or three kids per grade, no more…It was a normal school. Then, well, the great *immigration* began from

> Bolivia, from Peru, and Paraguay, and they started to come *here*. So the Argentines started to leave. (School Personnel 7)

The sentiment expressed by this teacher was representative of a perspective I found common among school personnel at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*; that being, there were almost no immigrants before, and suddenly they were flooding the borders, driving "Argentines" out of their neighborhoods, schools, and businesses. Though seemingly related primarily to xenophobic attitudes, there was a racialized component to this critique of the demographic shifts that had taken place that were masked by national and cultural claims. Although there was often a line drawn broadly between "foreigners" and "Argentines," many of the neighborhoods that had been experiencing demographic shifts had always been popular destinations for immigrants; the difference was that rather than being white Spanish and Italian immigrants as they were in the past, they were increasingly indigenous Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants.

This teacher's comment also reflected the contrast often made between these populations among white Argentines: being of European heritage was "normal," while being of indigenous descent was not; European immigrants were "working people," but indigenous immigrants lived off of the government; people of European descent were allowed claim to Argentina, but indigenous immigrants were outsiders who were taking control of "Argentine" spaces. During school observation, I noted similar perspectives being expressed by other school personnel, as well.

> [School Personnel 4] started talking to me about changes in the neighborhood. She worked at [*Escuela Andina*] a long time ago, and it used to only have "Argentine" kids. Then she said [*Escuela Europea*] used to be a "top" school, but it changed as more Latin American immigrants moved into the neighborhood. She said as the schools declined, more people put their kids in private schools because the parochial

> schools are actually inexpensive because the government subsidizes them, so "Argentines" started choosing those. (Fieldnote 9.16.15, *Escuela Europea*)

In this excerpt, I described a conversation I had with another teacher who discussed the shift in school demographics, and she also stressed the displacement of "Argentines" by Latin American immigrant communities. Comments such as these demonstrate who was and was not seen as deserving of being in Argentina, mirroring the acceptance of Spanish and Italian immigrants and rejection of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants throughout Argentine society. While these issues were able to lie dormant in this neighborhood in the past, demographic changes were aggravating ideology based on racial prejudice and the superiority of whiteness that already existed in Argentina.

Expectation of assimilation to the dominant culture. Among school personnel at both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, the expectation of students and parents of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families to assimilate to the school culture, and dominant culture as an extension, was accepted as the norm. While the term "assimilation" held a negative connotation and generally was avoided, other terms such as "adaptation" and "becoming accustomed" were used to convey the expectation of Latin American immigrant students and families to fit themselves into the existing school structure and the culture of the dominant group. While there were often subtle references to this expectation throughout the day-to-day happenings of the schools, one teacher was especially explicit about her dissatisfaction with being expected to accommodate Latin American immigrant students and families as the Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant populations of the city increased over time:

> De pronto, es como que nos tuvimos que faenar y acomodar a los que venían. Ósea, ellos no se acomodaron a nosotros. Nosotros al principio intentamos que la comunidad se acomodará a nuestro ritmo, pero fracasamos. Entonces nosotros tuvimos que acomodar a la comunidad. Ósea, acomodamos objetivos de enseñanza, acomodamos como ya te digo contenidos…Tuvimos que bajar todo uno o dos niveles.
>
> Suddenly, it's like we had to work and accommodate [the Latin American immigrants] that came. They didn't accommodate us. At first we tried to make it so that the community would accommodate our rhythm, but we failed. So we had to accommodate the community. We accommodated teaching objectives, as I already told you we accommodated the content…We had to lower everything one or two levels. (School Personnel 7)

Having to accommodate Latin American immigrant students and families led to frustration among many teachers who were unable to continue their established practices for working with white Argentine students and receive the same results as the neighborhood demographics shifted over time. Consequently, accommodating the Latin American immigrant populations of the school was seen as having to lower the quality of education students received, as the solution to pedagogical challenges and incongruences between school and home cultures was to provide Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students with less rigorous material. While school personnel at times acknowledged the impact of some Latin American immigrant students having to adapt to differing school structures and expectations between Argentina and Bolivia, Peru, or Paraguay, the systems of education in other Latin American countries were discussed as inferior to that of Argentina, and thus the cultures of these countries were considered contributing factors to any academic difficulties that played out in the classroom.

As a result of the expectation of assimilation to the established school norms based on the dominant culture, when some sort of conflict arose with students and parents of Latin

American immigrant families, school personnel often placed blame on their lack of ability to assimilate to Argentine culture. For instance, I often overheard teachers expressing dissatisfaction regarding the involvement of Latin American immigrant parents in the education of their children, so I began asking school personnel about the differences between the participation of Latin American immigrant parents and white Argentine parents directly in interviews.

> Siempre hay diferencias porque los costumbres [*sic*] son diferentes. Entonces el papá que es de otro lugar debe adaptarse al país primero y después a la escuela. Y muchos responded muy bien. Hay familias brillantes. Responden muy bien. Y se adaptan muy bien. Por lo tanto el niño viene contento a estudiar, porque ese papá que viene a trabajar o viene con otro objetivo, américa latina, hace que el niño venga contento a la escuela porque se adoptó muy bien al país. No todos. Hablo en líneas generales.
>
> There are always differences because the customs are different. So the parent that is from another place should adapt to the country first and then to the school. And many of them respond very well. There are brilliant families. They respond very well. They adapt very well. Therefore a child can come to study happily, because that Latin American parent that came to work or came for another objective makes it so that the child can come to the school to study happily because the parent adapted very well to the country. Not all of them. I'm speaking in general terms. (School Personnel 4)

As expressed in the previous statement, school personnel often saw it as the responsibility of children and especially parents of immigrant families to assimilate and accommodate the expectations of Argentine culture and norms, including those embedded in public schools. As a result, level of assimilation was used to distinguish "acceptable" Latin American immigrant students and families from those who were deemed "unacceptable." Those that were thought to have assimilated to Argentine culture as a result of their assimilation to the norms of the schools were discussed as "brilliant," at least in my presence, as teachers were able to continue their practices without much expectation of mutual accommodation.

Questioning of the "cleanliness" of Latin American immigrants. Seeing connections to the demographic shifts in the local population, several school personnel tied the gradual decline in the quality of life in the neighborhood to the increase of Latin American immigrants in the area. This was especially true as it related to hygiene and sanitation, as the perception of a lack of cleanliness of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants was one of the most commonly discussed issues among school personnel when discussing demographic shifts. While the uncleanliness of the neighborhood was in fact a concern to many in the area, including Latin American immigrants, a large portion of school personnel attributed the environmental contamination to the commerce activities of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants in the area. Some educators discussed these issues among the schools' Latin American immigrant student populations as well.

> Me molesta por ejemplo que se ocupan la calle, me molesta que yo no puedo pasar. Me molesta la suciedad. Es muy sucio. No cuidan. No valoran. Lo mismo pasa acá. Ósea, ellos comen y tiran al *piso*, en la *escuela*. Ósea, no. Come, y tira la basura.
>
> It bothers me for example that they [Latin American immigrants] take up the street, it bothers me that I can't pass. The filth bothers me. It's very dirty. They don't take care of anything. They don't value anything. The same thing happens here [at the school]. They eat and they throw [the wrappers] on the *floor*, in the *school*. No. Eat, and throw it in the trash. (School Personnel 7)

Here a teacher expressed her dissatisfaction not only of the uncleanliness of the neighborhood but also the behavior of Latin American immigrant students in the school. Using statements such as "they don't take care of anything" and "they don't value anything," she extended these behaviors of a few to serve as a reflection of the character of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants overall. Among school personnel, such

behaviors, such as littering, often were discussed as though they were inherent in, and specific to, the Latin American immigrant community.

Though school personnel typically limited their discussions of the cleanliness of Latin American immigrant populations to health and environmental concerns while in my presence, they were more open about their views with other educators in their schools who they believed to hold similar opinions.

> Es como que los menosprecia. Los *underestimates*, ¿viste? Porque "*son bolivianos*," porque "*no saben hablar*," porque "*son sucios.*" Porque yo lo he escuchado.
>
> It's like they look down on them. They underestimate them, see? Because "*they're Bolivian*," because "*they don't know how to talk*," because "*they're dirty*." Because I've heard it. (School Personnel 7)

In hushed tones, this teacher discussed how others that work in the school view Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families as "dirty," highlighting its connection to both racial and cultural themes. However, even though here this teacher noted the discriminatory nature of these conversations among other school personnel, she also regularly made similar comments about Latin American immigrant populations and was known to hold biased views. In this way, the contradictions present within this teacher's perspectives of Latin American immigrant communities reflected the prevailing trends I found among many school personnel; though she denounced the discriminatory attitudes of other teachers and saw such views as problematic, she also held biased beliefs and engaged in similar conversations.

Doubting the intellectual capacity of Latin American immigrants. Throughout *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, there was a general doubt regarding the intellectual capacity of Latin American immigrant families and students. For instance, in the following

excerpt, a teacher explained why she believed the student population at *Escuela Europea* was made up of fewer Latin American immigrant students than other schools in the area.

> La única dificultad que encuentro es que tiene [un currículo difícil], entonces depende de la capacitación de cada alumno, si pueda adaptarse o no al país y a este tipo de escuelas…[Depende] de la capacidad intelectual…Hay pocos extranjeros en la escuela…No hay muchos…Yo pienso que no hay muchos porque hay [un currículo difícil]. *Yo* pienso. Es la explicación que yo encuentro, que por allí es muy difícil adaptarte al país, adaptarte al [currículo], adaptarte al español, adaptarte a los costumbres [*sic*], adaptarte al inglés. Vos pensás que en otras escuelas de jornada simple…Es menos esfuerzo que requiere.
>
> The only difference I see is that it has [a difficult curriculum], so it depends on the ability of each student, if they can adapt to the country or not and to this type of school…[It depends] on their intellectual capacity…There are few foreigners in the school…There aren't many…I think there aren't many because of the [difficult curriculum]. *I* think. It's the explanation I find, as it's difficult to adapt to the country, adapt to the [curriculum], adapt to the Spanish, adapt to the customs, adapt to the English. Just think that in other half-day schools…It requires less effort. (School Personnel 4)

Highlighting the school's difficult curriculum, this teacher believed that attendance at *Escuela Europea* required meeting high demands that most Latin American immigrants would be unable to achieve. Consequently, she suggested that half-day schools, which she claimed here "require[d] less effort," may have been more appropriate for Latin American immigrant student. Even though there were few differences in the academic performance of white Argentine students and students of Latin American immigrant families at the school, this teacher, as well as other school personnel, tended to see Latin American immigrant students as less capable of staying on pace with the curriculum as a result of their own deficiencies such as limited intellectual capacity.

Perceiving apathy among Latin American immigrants. When Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families that did not assimilate in ways visible to

school personnel or did not participate in the schools in accordance with dominant norms, they were seen as apathetic toward their responsibilities. This was especially true as it related to the schools' expectations of parental involvement, as the view of Latin American immigrant parents as "not caring" about their children or "not being interested" in their children's education was rampant among the opinions of school personnel.

> No les interesa [a los estudiantes inmigrantes]…porque no tienen el apoyo de la familia. Porque a la familia tampoco les importa. Porque—te estoy hablando de la escuela en general, ¿no? No les importa. Ven la escuela como el momento para dejar a sus hijos y continuar con sus actividades.
>
> They [immigrant students] aren't interested…because they don't have the support of the family. Because they don't care. Because—I am talking about the school in general. They don't care. They see the school as a moment to leave their children and continue on with their activities. (School Personnel 7)

As this teacher's comment illustrated, because Latin American immigrant parents did not support their children's education in the ways in which school personnel expected, they were viewed as "not caring" about school. The view of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families using the school as little more than a daycare for their children was especially common.

These discussions of Latin American immigrant parents "not caring" about their children or their education also often involved contrasts with Argentine parents, and occasionally even the most progressive of teachers would stumble into explanations that highlighted this perhaps unconscious bias. This comparison often came up when discussing children who were considered exceptional cases, such as those students who were labeled as having behavioral, learning, or health issues by school personnel.

> Tengo un caso muy preciso…Los padres yo los veo como muy, son bolivianos, que no les importa porque hace un montón que estoy pidiendo que los lleve a un

> [médico]…Y estamos desde el principio del año esperando eso, cuando en un momento te manifiesta que tiene plata para llevarlo particular, y en otro momento te dice que "sale muy caro" y no puede. Y los ves en unas camionetas súper caras. Entonces allí yo noto falta de interés. Después no, también tengo nenes que son argentinos que por allí no tienen ni mamá ni papá y los cuidan [otros miembros de la familia] y los cuidan como pueden. Entonces su respuesta fue, "No, porque…Bueno, yo hago lo que puedo." Esa fue la respuesta.
>
> I have a very specific case…I see that the parents, they are Bolivian, they don't care because I have been asking them to take their child to a [doctor] for a really long time…And we've been waiting on that since the beginning of the year, when one moment they tell you that they have the money to take the child to a specialist, and in another moment they tell you "it's very expensive" and they can't. And you see them in super expensive pickup trucks. So there I notice a lack of interest. Then I also have for example kids that are Argentine that don't have a mother or a father and [other family members] take care of them and they do what they can. So their response was, "No, because well, I do what I can." That was the response. (School Personnel 6)

While initially in the interview this teacher had claimed there were no real differences between Argentine and Latin American immigrant parents, she ultimately expressed an assumption that was common among school personnel: when Latin American immigrant parents failed to meet expectations, it was because they did not care about their children, but when Argentine parents, or in this case legal guardians, failed to meet expectations, it was a result of personal hardship.

This teacher's contrast of the use of financial resources between Latin American immigrant parents and Argentine parents was common throughout the schools as well. While there was some acknowledgement of the limited financial resources of many Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families, there was heavy criticism among school personnel related to how those resources were allocated. Whereas this teacher discussed the "expensive pickup trucks" of some Latin American immigrants of the area,

others regularly complained that Latin American immigrant parents rarely contributed financially to the schools.

> Si no pagan colaboradora, hay cosas que no se pueden hacer…No hay materiales…Pero mucho tiene que ver con esto, que la familia tampoco ayuda. Porque si ellos no pagan *veinte pesos,* no se puede comprar marcador, no se puede comprar qué sé yo libros, no se pueden comprar mapas. No colaboran. No son de colaborar.
>
> If they don't pay the requested donations, there are things that's can't be done…There are no materials…But it has to do with this, that the family doesn't help. Because if they don't pay *twenty pesos*, markers can't be bought, books can't be bought, maps can't be bought. They don't collaborate. They aren't ones for collaborating. (School Personnel 7)

Though there were also many white Argentine parents that did not contribute to the schools, their use of financial resources was not scrutinized nor seen as a reflection of the entire community of Argentine parents of European descent. On the other hand, Latin American immigrant parents as a whole were seen as not collaborating with the schools and as not being a collaborative people in general. This stood in stark contrast to the actual organization of the Latin American immigrant community of the area, as many worked together to ensure the wellbeing of others, such as by caring for their children.

School personnel also held other biases related to the behavior of a subset of Latin American immigrants that were extended to serve as the basis for judgments of the entire community, such as in the following teacher's discussion of the alcohol abuse and violent behavior among some Latin American immigrants.

> Ósea, me molesta la violencia. El boliviano también, y *el peruano*, y todos que están acá, toman mucho alcohol. Entonces cuando toman mucho alcohol, se ponen más violentos. Vos podés, lo ves que se pelean…Pelean pero porque están borrachos.

> The violence bothers me. Bolivians also, and *Peruvians*, and all the ones [Latin American immigrants] that are here, they drink a lot of alcohol. You can see that they fight…They fight because they're drunk. (School Personnel 7)

While alcoholism and violence were issues facing the community of the area, this was not limited to the Latin American immigrant population; several white Argentine students and families of European descent were known to face difficulties related to substance abuse and domestic violence, as well. However, when discussing these issues among Latin American immigrant communities, they were completely decontextualized, with school personnel ignoring factors such as limited access to mental health services, oppressive working conditions, and other poverty-related issues. Instead, these behaviors were viewed as characteristic of all Latin American immigrants as though they were innate to this population. However, during instances in which white Argentine families were discussed as having similar difficulties, they were met with sympathy and understanding for the hardships they faced.

Assuming the prioritization of work over family. The difficulties parents faced in meeting the expectations of schools as a result of work-related obligations was a controversial issue at both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*. Though this was true for both white Argentine and Latin American immigrant parents, there was a difference in how attending to their work-related obligations were framed. For instance, when discussing white Argentine parents, school personnel often understood that parents might not be able to come to the school because of work, while Latin American immigrant parents were thought to prioritize work over their families.

> She says they've got to attract parents to the school…She seems to think their lack of presences is a lack of interest…She starts talking about how they need to talk to

> parents about how "*la soledad es violencia*" ["loneliness is also violence"]. She goes into a little bit of a rant about how the parents put work before their kids and it's a problem. She says she would never do that. She mentions how some are working until 2 am and leave their kids alone. (Fieldnote Excerpt 10.15.15, *Escuela Andina*)

Here, I described a moment at *Escuela Andina* in which school personnel were discussing ways of working with Latin American immigrant families. While this impromptu meeting was originally led by teachers seeking collaboration with Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant parents, another member of the school personnel joined the meeting and began discussing their working until late into the night as if it were a personal choice as opposed to the possibility of it being a necessity.

As in the previous example, school personnel regularly made comparisons between how Latin American immigrant parents managed their work responsibilities and what they believed they would do in similar situations, often failing to take into consideration the differences related to their employment and the precarious and exploitative working conditions in which many Latin American immigrant parents had to engage.

> Vos acá llamas a un padre y no viene, ósea porque están *ocupados en trabajar*, por ejemplo, ¿no? Que *todos* trabajamos. Yo también trabajo. Pero es como que a ellos, no les interesa. Ósea, a la comunidad no le interesa la escuela. Dejan a los chicos y se van. En cambio, en otras comunidades, sí te interesa que tu hijo tenga un *lindo pizarrón* o que *la escuela está pintada* o que está limpia. A ellos, le da lo mismo.
>
> Here you call a parent and they don't come, because they are *busy working*, for example, no? *Everyone* works. I work too. But it's like they don't care. The community does not care about the school. They leave the kids and go. On the other hand, in other communities, it interests you that your kid had *a nice chalkboard* or that *the school is painted* or that it's clean. To them, it's all the same. (School Personnel 7)

Reinforcing the aforementioned perceptions of apathy toward education and family among the Latin American immigrant community, this teacher's comment also illustrated the

common belief that Latin American immigrant parents used work as an excuse for not being more involved within the schools.

The assumption that Latin American immigrant parents prioritized work over their families was also used by school personnel to explain why some children of Latin American immigrant families did not assimilate to schools in the ways they expected.

> También tenés otros casos excepcionales en donde el papá no se ocupa de la familia porque en realidad solo vino a trabajar entonces no puede—y le cuesta adaptarse. Si le cuesta el adulto adaptarse, ese niño seguramente llore en la escuela, y le cueste adaptarse también.
>
> You also have other exceptional cases where the parent doesn't take care of the family because in reality they only came here to work so they can't—they have difficulty adapting. If it's difficult for the adult to adapt, that child will certainly cry at school, and they would have difficulty adapting too. (School Personnel 4)

As in the previous excerpt, Latin American immigrant parents' pursuit of financial stability for their families was framed as a contributing factor in why some Latin American immigrant children encountered socioemotional difficulties at school. Discussed here as "exceptional cases," the attribution of Latin American immigrant students' difficulties in schools to the lack of assimilation of their parents actually was a common, especially for Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students who were seen as "problematic."

In addition to citing Latin American immigrant parents' prioritization of work over the education of their children as part of the reason why they were not present in schools and why their children sometimes faced difficulties in the classroom, it was also discussed as the reason school personnel were not able to build closer relationships with Latin American immigrant families. However, in instances when parents were present in the schools, school personnel rarely engaged with Latin American immigrant parents. Take the follow fieldnote

excerpt for example, in which I discussed school personnel's lack of interaction with Latin American immigrant parents immediately following a school event to which parents were invited.

> After, a few teachers talked [with] white parents. The rest disappear quickly (including [School Personnel 4]). [A teacher] gets snagged up for a quick chat with a white mom. [School Personnel 3] stays out and chats with several. I hear 3 Bolivian or Peruvian moms say, *"¿Dónde está la maestra?"* ["Where is the teacher?"]. Theirs had disappeared. The rest of the Andean parents say hi to their kids, hanging around for a minute, and then leave. No one ever tries to talk to them. I'm realizing they are just completely ignored. (Fieldnote Excerpt 9.9.15, *Escuela Europea*)

As reflected in this instance, Latin American immigrant parents, who attended school events far more often than school personnel perceived, were generally ignored even when they were present at the schools and seeking engagement with school personnel. Before and after school events when parents were easily accessible, school personnel were often in the teachers' lounge, and on the rare occasion that they engaged with parents, it was often only with white families.

Chapter Conclusion

At both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, superficial multiculturalism, such as acknowledging visible forms of culture and promoting the idea that "everyone is equal," did little to combat more deeply rooted racial and cultural biases among school personnel. Ultimately, Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families still were expected to assimilate to the school and dominant culture, as notions of the superiority of whiteness resulted in school personnel viewing Latin American immigrant populations as inferior. Consequently, when white Argentine families did not meet the expectations of schools, it was seen as resulting from personal difficulties, while when Latin American

immigrant families did the same, it was seen as resulting from deficiencies often passed off as cultural but still discussed as if they were inherent racial characteristics.

Furthermore, though school personnel believed there to be little racial discrimination against Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, interviews with school personnel and students as well as observations indicated the presence of negative perceptions of Latin American immigrants at both schools. These negative perceptions occasionally resulted in race-related conflicts, such as white students using racial slurs to insult Latin American immigrant students, and explicit forms of racial discrimination among school personnel, such as doubting the "cleanliness" of Latin American immigrants. However, more common among school personnel were underlying biases based on a combination of racial and cultural stereotypes that impacted how they viewed and worked with Latin American immigrant students and families, such as doubting their intellectual capacity, perceiving apathy toward their education, and assuming the prioritization of work over family.

V. Critical School Personnel Perspectives and Approaches to Working with Latin American Immigrant Students and Families

Though prevailing perceptions of and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families indicated racial and cultural biases among many school personnel, within both *Escuela Andina* and *Escuela Europea*, there were small groups of teachers striving to work more democratically with students and families of nondominant backgrounds. While these teachers also sometimes showed underlying biases in subtle ways, they were actively engaged in developing holistic views of the experiences of Latin American immigrant families and more equitable educational practices.

Acknowledging Systemic Issues Impacting Nondominant Populations

National and global systems of discrimination. Unlike the majority of school personnel who rarely mentioned the impact of sociopolitical contexts on the day-to-day happenings within the schools, there was a subset of educators that regularly considered the ways in which larger systemic forces shaped the realities of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families. When discussing immigration and race-related issues specifically, these school personnel noted the variation in the societal value placed on immigration from different regions of the world.

> Nosotros, en verdad recibimos en general migrantes de todo el mundo, pero como en la sociedad siempre está esa diferencia, los europeos, y los de los limítrofes digamos. Pero, es complicado porque los migrantes europeos no le molestan a la gente. Si les molestan a los otros. Dicen, “Estos vienen a sacar el trabajo.” ¿Y por qué a los otros no?
>
> We actually receive migrants from all over the world, but as a society there has always been that difference, the Europeans and bordering countries. But, it’s complicated because European migrants don’t bother people. Other [migrants] do

> bother them though. They say, "These ones came to take jobs." And why not the other [European migrants]? (School Personnel 11)

As this teacher's statement highlighted, these school personnel questioned why European immigration was not seen as problematic in Argentine society while Latin American immigrant groups were blamed for the issues the country faced. In their assessment of these issues, some teachers noted connections between racial and cultural biases and global systems of discrimination, as another teacher explained:

> En este país hay una cultura dominante…Es decir, como que la inmigración europea fue buena, y como que la inmigración cuando vienen de los países latinoamericanos no es buena…Argentina se dice que no es racista, que no discrimina, hace no sé cuánto. Todos los países latinoamericanos dicen exactamente lo mismo. Todos los países europeos dicen lo mismo. Estados Unidos, Canadá, dicen todo lo mismo y la realidad es que sí. La realidad es que sí hay discriminación y hay discriminación porque es una concepción colonial y hegemónica que básicamente tiene raíces europeas…Entonces esa carga de decir, "Bueno, yo, que soy el europeo, blanco, como el *white anglo-saxon*-bip," o lo que fuera, es una mentalidad. Entonces, es una mentalidad que se transmite por generación, se transmite por la familia, y a veces se transmite por la sociedad.
>
> In this country there is a dominant culture…That is, European immigration was good, and immigration coming from Latin American countries isn't good. Argentina says that it's not racist, that it doesn't discriminate, for I don't know how long. All Latin American countries say exactly the same thing. All European countries say the same. The United States, Canada, they say the same and in reality they are. The reality is that there is discrimination and there is discrimination because of a hegemonic and colonial conception that basically has European roots. So this idea of saying, "Well, since I'm European, white, as a white anglo-saxon" or whatever, it's a mentality. So, it's a mentality that is transmitted through generations, it's transmitted through the family, and sometimes it's transmitted through society. (School Personnel 9)

Here the teacher highlighted that European immigration had been considered desirable while Latin American immigration had not, not only in Argentina but throughout the Americas and Europe. While these countries claimed not to perpetuate notions of white supremacy, ultimately they did because they were founded upon problematic ideology.

Disinvestment by the local government. In addition to discussing global and national systems of discrimination, this subset of teachers was also critical of the city's treatment of Latin American immigrant populations. For instance, discussions of the uncleanliness of the neighborhood were also present among this group of teachers as with other school personnel at *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* (see Chapter 4), but rather than seeing Latin American immigrant communities as the source of the problem, they highlighted the ways in which the city government had reduced resources for the neighborhood as its Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant populations had grown.

SP2: Hay mucha gente que viene del campo en Bolivia, entonces su estilo de vida en el campo era muy diferente a lo que va a ser su estilo de vida acá en la ciudad, en este contexto. Entonces sufren mucho hacinamiento, falta de espacio en las viviendas y demás. Hay mucho problema con la higiene, con la contaminación ambiental—por distintas razones. No solamente por ellos, porque hay un abandono del gobierno también.	SP2: There are a lot of people that come from the countryside in Bolivia, so their lifestyle was very different in the countryside than it's going to be here in the city, in this context. So they suffer from overcrowding, lack of space in their housing and so on. There is a problem with hygiene, with environmental contamination—for different reasons, not just because of them, because there is an abandonment by the government also.
J: ¿En general o en esta zona?	J: In general or in this area?
SP2: En esta zona, sí. Al no hacerse cargo, no atender algo que es una necesidad para todos. Para ellos, la comunidad boliviana inmigrante también es necesario un ambiente más higiénico porque ellos también se enferman cuando hay suciedad y cuando los servicios básicos de higiene no son atendidos. Y también para nosotros, para todos. Para los chicos principalmente.	SP2: In this area, yes. From not taking responsibility, not attending to something that is a necessity, for everyone. A more hygienic environment is also necessary for the Bolivian immigrant community because they get sick too when there is filth and when basic hygienic services are not attended to. And for us too, for everyone. Mainly for the kids.
J: ¿Y eso es un cambio o siempre ha sido así?	J: And this is a change or has it always been like this?

SP2: Desde—los últimos 15 años, ha sido así.	SP2: Since—for the last 15 years it has been like this.
J: ¿Con los cambios en la población también el gobierno dejó de—?	J: With the changes in the population the government stopped—?
T: Sí. Sí, sí, sí.	T: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

The lack of attention by the government was visible, especially in the area of the neighborhood with the highest concentration of immigrant activity in a number of ways; for instance, there were almost no public trashcans to dispose of waste, street and sidewalk cleaning was left to the residents of the area, and the infrastructure was crumbling due to lack of upkeep. *Escuela Andina*, which was located deeper into that area of the neighborhood, also regularly lost water and electrical services, often resulting in the cancellation of classes or, if students have already arrived, wasted instructional hours due to the inability of school personnel to teach without the necessary basic resources (see Chapter 6). Though the majority of school personnel from both schools included in the study blamed the behavior and lifestyle of the growing immigrant population for the issues the neighborhood was facing, this subset of teachers stressed the government's disinvestment in maintaining it as the root of the problem.

School personnel living in other areas further from the schools were especially aware of the limited investment of the government in the neighborhood, as they saw stark contrasts in terms of how resources were distributed throughout the city.

> Hay como un abandono de ciertos barrios que se, entendés, que se ocupen menos de la política, ósea, del gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Por ejemplo, cuando colocan las campanas verdes, para la solución del recibo, bueno, lo hacen primero en Recoleta o Palermo, y después hay barrios olvidados que—recién llegaron por allí, no sé, seis u ocho meses después.

> There is an abandonment of certain neighborhoods that aren't as in line with the politics of the government of the City of Buenos Aires. For example, when they put out the green receptacles to address the collection of recycling, well, first they do it in Recoleta o Palermo, and then there are forgotten neighborhoods that—recently they arrived here around, I don't know, six or eight months later. (School Personnel 8)

Here a teacher described the distribution of waste receptacles that are part of an environmental campaign sponsored by the city government to encourage recycling. As she pointed out, the first neighborhoods to receive the receptacles at the beginning of the campaign were Recoleta and Palermo, two of the wealthiest neighborhoods of the City of Buenos Aires. In those areas, the populations were comprised primarily of with high numbers of white Argentines who strongly supported the conservative administration of the city, as well as European and U.S. tourists. The neighborhood where the two schools involved in this investigation were located, while not the poorest neighborhood of the city, was made up of residents of a lower socioeconomic status and was more diverse racially and culturally. Consequently, it was treated as less of a priority by the city government. The conservative administration of the city at the time, led by Mauricio Macri who later went on to become President of Argentina, had been criticized for its neglect of such neighborhoods, with critics citing xenophobic and classist attitudes among its members.

Problematic attitudes among other school personnel. In addition to their understanding of the complexities associated with the sociopolitical environment of the City of Buenos Aires, these teachers also acknowledged racial biases present among other school personnel. In the following example, one such teacher discussed the ways in which most of the school personnel engaged, or rather failed to engage, with the Latin American immigrant

community that made up a significant proportion of the neighborhood, highlighting race-related biases disguised by seemingly-neutral complaints:

> Consumen algunas cosas pero, por ejemplo, ningún docente come nada de lo que se vende en la vereda. Lo rechazan. Pero sí van al chino a la vuelta, y compran por allí de un local. No, no toleran la cuestión sanitaria de los puestos. No lo toleran cuando en realidad ellos creen como sus manos son morenas son sucias y tienen miedo de comer esas cosas.
>
> They [school personnel] buy some things but, for example, none of the teachers eat anything they sell on the sidewalk. They reject it. But they go to the convenience store around the corner, and they buy there from a store. No, they don't tolerate the sanitation issue of the [food] stands. They don't tolerate it when in reality they believe that because their hands are brown, they are dirty, and they are afraid to eat those things. (School Personnel 1)

In her statement, this teacher addressed how school personnel often resorted to explanations that appeared to be related to food safety concerns to justify their distancing themselves from the Latin American immigrant community when such distance was based on race-related biases. She pointed out how teachers avoided purchasing food items from the Latin American immigrant community and instead sought out local convenience stores, which were typically owned by European-descended Argentines that resided in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, these school personnel were critical of the ways in which the majority of school personnel approached working with Latin American immigrant students and families, offering their own critiques of how diversity was treated in public schools. Though the majority school personnel rarely engaged in overt forms of discrimination or displays of beliefs regarding the superiority of whiteness, school personnel among this subset were concerned about students' ability to perceive racial biases among other school personnel, such as the aforementioned avoidance of interaction with Latin American immigrants in the neighborhood. Ultimately, these school personnel believed that the perspectives teachers

have as people in their day-to-day lives inevitably come out in the classroom, even if only in subtle ways. After being asked if the school is a comfortable environment for students of Latin American immigrant families, one teacher discussed this issue directly:

> Es como la sociedad…Depende mucho del docente que tengan…Si yo a vos te estoy diciendo, "Mira, yo adentro de grado, para mí son todos iguales. Pero viste, no es lo mismo. Uno es un negrito." Eso los pibes lo perciben…Cuando vos tenés una mirada de grado adentro de grado y otra cuando estás afuera, la tuya es la que tenés cuando estás afuera.
>
> It's like society…It depends on the teacher that they have…If I am saying to you, "Look, in the classroom, they are all equal to me. But you see, it's not the same. One is a little black kid." Those kids perceive that…When you have one perspective inside the classroom and another when you are outside of it, your perspective is the one you have when you are outside of it. (School Personnel 3)

Among this subset of teachers, there was a high level of political engagement related to the social issues that impacted the students and families of their school populations, and therefore they were critical of superficial forms of multicultural education in which school personnel claimed to view all students as equal without a deeper recognition of systems of discrimination and privilege.

For instance, such school personnel were critical of the lack of application of equity-based practices within schools. When discussing how her school had taken superficial action to address a concern that was impacting their student population, one teacher expressed her discontent with the response of fellow teachers to such issues:

> Esas son, como, las cosas que no sirven. O, o, cuando dicen [el personal de la escuela], "Los derechos humanos. Vamos a hablar qué es los derechos humanos. Entonces *la Convención de los Derechos Humanos dice que...*" Pero si vos no transmitís eso en el hacer, no tiene sentido. Como que vos tenés que enseñar en clave de derechos, y tus clases tienen que ser, como, más *democráticas*...Si vos le decís, "Estos son tus derechos" y después sos una autoritaria, es como que no tiene mucho sentido.

> Those are the things that don't work. Or when they [school personnel] say, "Human rights. We are going to talk about what human rights are. So *the Declaration of Human Rights says*..." But if you don't transmit this in what you do, it doesn't make sense. You have to teach in accordance with rights, and your classes have to be more *democratic*...If you say, "These are your rights" and then you are authoritarian, it's meaningless. (School Personnel 11)

This body of educators openly recognized the need to push for more critical education to enact real change in the lives of their students of Latin American immigrant families, as well as other nondominant populations throughout Argentine society.

Advancement of skills in working with Latin American immigrant populations.

These school personnel also sought out their own training related to working with nondominant student populations, as there was no such training required by the government for working in public schools. As the following member of the school personnel stated, she received her training as a result of her own interests:

> Yo sé que la capacitación que los docentes recibimos es la que cada uno buscamos de acuerdo de nuestros intereses. Y sí, yo he recibido porque yo he buscado capacitarme para trabajar en medio de la diversidad, a través de cursos, a través de carreras—distintas cosas que uno va buscando a través de lecturas, a través de proyectos que uno organiza también.
>
> I know that the teacher training that we receive is what each of us looks for in terms of our interests. And yes, I have received [such training] because I have sought to train myself to work amongst diversity, through courses, through careers—different things that one searches for through readings, through projects that one organizes as well.

This member of the school personnel, as well as others among the group, regularly attended workshops and other events to develop their knowledge and skill to best work with diverse student populations. Given their location in a neighborhood with a large number of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants, many also sought out information focused specifically on working with Latin American immigrant communities.

Approaches to Working with Latin American Immigrant Students and Families

Building relationships with families. For these school personnel, though they also enjoyed the multicultural activities and events put on by their schools, challenging the discriminatory treatment of nondominant student populations in a meaningful way started with their own teaching. In their attempts to promote a more critical approach to education, several of these teachers actively sought out more humanizing ways to work with students and parents of Latin American immigrant families. At the foundation of these approaches was often the development of strong relationships, as families were seen as an essential part of the education of students.

> Cuando empieza el año, hace muchos años, siempre con los chicos lo que planteo es, cuando pregunto, "¿Cuántos son?" Se cuentan, ¿viste? y dicen, "Somos 20." Y yo les digo, "Son 400." Y dicen, "So, somos 20." No, porque acá viene el niño con las expectativas de la mamá, las expectativas del papá, si los papás están separados con otras expectativas de la otra pareja, los tíos, la sociedad…hay un montón de cosas que se ponen adentro del grado que superan la cantidad de alumnos.
>
> For many years now, when the school year starts, I always ask the kids, "How many of you are there?" They count and they say, "There are 20 of us." And I tell them, "There are 400 of you." And they say, "No, there are 20 of us." No, because the child comes here with the expectations of the mother, the expectations of the father, if the parents are separated there are expectations of their partners, the aunts and uncles, society…there are a lot of things put inside of the class that surpasses the quantity of students. (School Personnel 3)

This awareness of the students as being part of a larger social network often resulted in teachers working more integrally with families, including more direct communication, openness about families' hardships that had the potential to impact the children, and collaboration to seek out solutions to difficulties students faced at school.

In this way, families were treated as partners in educating their children. Though it was not always easy for these school personnel to approaching working with families in this

way, they saw it as one of the most effective ways of encouraging student academic achievement.

> Cuando el pibe te tiene confianza y la familia te pone la confianza es más fácil. Se puede aprender. Y hasta al pibe a que vos decís, "Este me va a costar," aprende. Todos aprenden. Todos aprenden, pero, es eso, ¿vistes? Para mí, si no lo haces con amor, no podés. Esto no es como trabajar en una oficina…Y a veces te vas con cosas, a veces cargado con cosas que les pasan a los pibes o que te pasan en la escuela, pero, no sé. Yo no conozco otra forma. No podría hacerlo de otra forma.
>
> When the kid trusts you and the family trusts you, it's easier. They can learn. And even the kid that you think, "This one is going to be hard for me," they learn. They all learn. They all learn, but, it's that, see? To me, if you don't do it with love, you can't do it. This isn't like working in an office…And sometimes you leave with things, sometimes you carry things that happen to the kids or that happen to you at school, but I don't know. I don't know any other way. I couldn't do it any other way. (School Personnel 10)

Highlighting the differences between working as a public educator and other forms of employment, this teacher noted the emotional component of working with students and families. Though she also faced difficulties in facilitating the learning of academic materials among her students, she, like others among this group, strongly believed these obstacles could be overcome through working closely with families.

Collaborating with families to address a breadth of needs. These teachers also sought to engage in teaching practices that created a more active role for Latin American immigrant students and families, and they often started with the one of the most foundational practices of critical pedagogy: dialogue (Freire, 1970).

> Yo lo que veo es que no existe la categoría de diálogo. Siempre hay confrontación. Entonces no diálogo. No sabemos lo que quieren. Suponemos con nuestros mitos, nuestras concepciones liberales. Suponemos y también lo que hacemos es jugarle de lo nuestro.
>
> What I see is that dialogue doesn't exist. There is always confrontation. So there's no dialogue. We don't know what they want. We suppose with our myths, our liberal

> conceptions. We suppose and what we also do is compare to how we live. (School Personnel 1)

Though it was rarely encouraged within schools, dialogue with both students and parents was prioritized among this subset of school personnel. For several, it was the first step in establishing democratic interactions with families, as they sought to construct the education of students in as much accordance with the desires of the community as much as possible.

Among this group of teachers, developing relationships with families typically also meant engaging in collaborative efforts to address student needs both inside and outside of the classroom. Arguing for the importance of schools providing support in a variety of domains of the lives of their students, they sought to understand the realities of the families beyond the educational context.

> Escuché situaciones muy conflictivas con papás que, cuando me toca trabajar con ellos, lo que yo me doy cuenta es que son papás que están interesados en cosas que sobrepasan el aprendizaje de las ciencias y de matemática y de la lengua. Hay papás que, yo me siento muy apoyado en general a veces por papás que vienen "mal calificados," entre comillas, por la institución. Porque la relación que tienen algunos papás es que entienden que tienen que formas parte del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.
>
> I have heard of very conflictive situations with parents that, when it's my turn to work with them, what I realize is that they are parents that are interested in things that go beyond learning science and math and language. There are parents that, I feel very supported in general by parents that would be considered "unqualified," so to speak, by the institution. Because the relationship that some parents have is that they understand that they have to form a part of the teaching and learning process. (School Personnel 3)

Though they recognized this went beyond the relationship that other school personnel established with parents, their openness to broaching concerns brought to them by parents allowed for more positive relationships with parents, especially those of nondominant groups.

One such example in which school personnel sought to create joint-solutions was when teachers at *Escuela Andina* organized an event to work with parents to address the issue of internet security. Internet security, especially regarding the use of social media, was becoming a concern throughout Argentina, and both of the schools addressed the issue throughout the year. However, while *Escuela Europea* organized a brief presentation with students only, a small group of critically engaged school personnel at *Escuela Andina* pushed to have the presentation with parents, as well.

Figure 5.1. Parents and students attend a teacher-organized event to discuss internet security concerns. Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 23 October 2015.

The meeting included two videos about internet security, as well as time for discussion related to the concerns of parents and potential solutions to monitoring students' use of social media to ensure their safety. At the end of the meeting, parents and students also wrote comments to teachers based on the meeting. Comments ranged from praise for

organizing the meeting, as seen in Figure 5.2, to direct questions parents had in seeking guidance in managing their children's use of the internet, as in Figure 5.3.

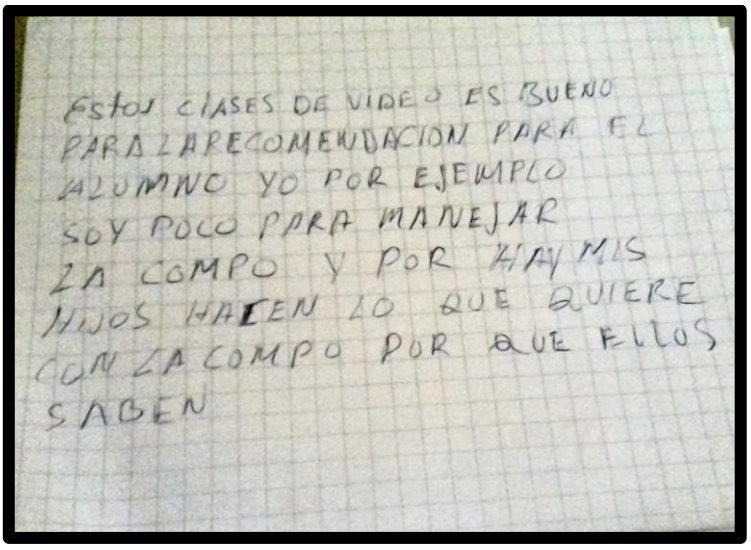
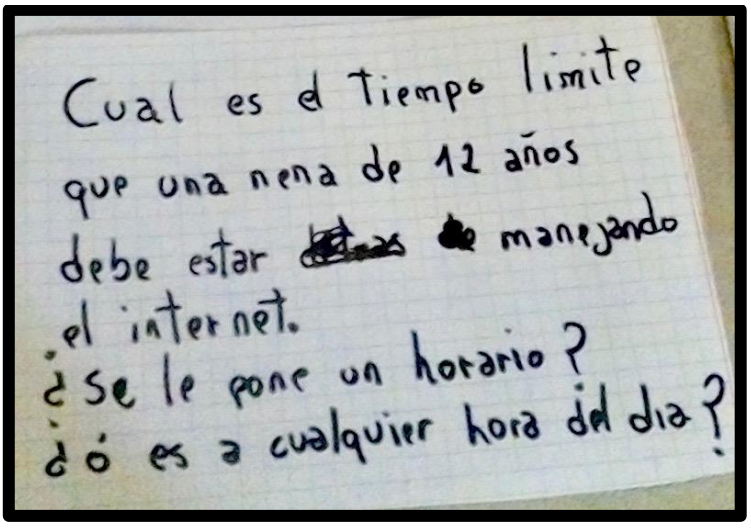


Figure 5.2. Parent comment from internet security meeting. It reads, "These classes with videos are good to recommend to students. For example I don't use the computer much and my kids do what they want with the computer because they know how."[13]



[13] "Estos clases de video es bueno [*sic*] para la recomendación [*sic*] para el alumno. Yo por ejemplo soy poco para manejar la compu y por hay [*sic*] mis hijos hacen lo que quiere con la compu por que [*sic*] ellos saben."

Figure 5.3. Parent question from internet security meeting. It reads, "What is the time limit that a 12-year-old girl should be using the internet? Do you establish a schedule? Or is it any time of day?"[14]

Students also shared their perspectives after the meeting, such as their concerns about social media being used by someone to hurt them, as in Figure 5.4. This was a rising concern for both students and parents in the area, as stories about child abductions and other abuses resulting from unsafe uses of social media circulated throughout the school and the community. However, prior to this meeting, it was unclear to what extent students and parents perceived the threat of certain behaviors on social media, such as sharing one's address or accepting Facebook friend requests from unknown accounts.

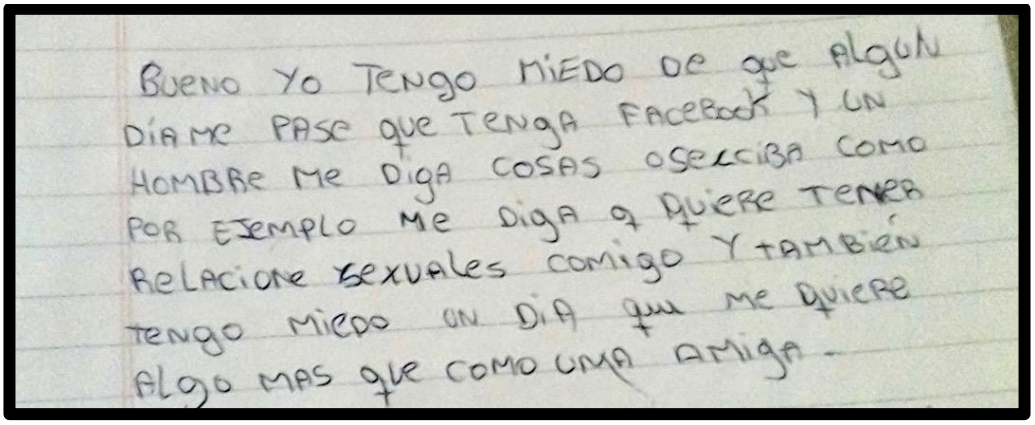


Figure 5.4. Student comment from internet security meeting. It reads, "Well I am afraid that one day I will have Facebook and a man will say obscene things like for example saying to me that he wants to have sexual relations with me and also I am afraid that he will want me as something more than a friend."[15]

[14] "Cual [*sic*] es el tiempo limite [*sic*] que una nena de 12 años debe estar manejando el internet. [*sic*] ¿Se le pone un horario? ¿O es a cualquier hora del día?"

[15] "Bueno tengo miedo de que algún [*sic*] día me pase que tenga Facebook y un hombre me diga cosas osecciba [*sic*] como por ejemplo me diga q[ue] quiere tener relacione [*sic*] sexuales conmigo y también tengo miedo un dia [*sic*] que me quiere algo más que una amiga."

Incorporating families from the beginning. For these teachers, the importance of developing strong relationships with families very early on in the formal education experiences of students was essential. While many school personnel complained of the lack of participation of Latin American immigrant families, these teachers worked to ensure parents were involved in all parts of their children's education from the start. Take the following teacher for example, who explained why she did not experience difficulties in relation to the participation of Latin American immigrant parents in the education of their children:

> No, no he tenido. Pero yo creo que por esto: porque es un trabajo que hicimos desde el principio del año, en convocar que vengan y que se sientan parte del proceso. Cuando el padre no se siente como parte del proceso, se siente tan alejado como que, ¿para qué va a venir? ¿para qué le vuelven a decir que el pibe hizo todo mal? ¿para qué va a venir? No viene. Y es más, los padres—pero esto es un trato que hicimos con mi compañera, con la otra señora [del grado]—padres que se ponían a llorar y decían, 'nuestros hijos leen más que nosotros.' Hay padres que no leen y no escriben. ¿Viste? Entonces, por eso tampoco los padres se acercan. Porque, vos vistes, si no le explicas, y si no les haces parte, los padres están completamente en otra cosa, de que laborar todo el día y le tiene que dar de comer al pibe. Está en otra.
>
> No, I haven't had any. But I think it's because of this: because it's a job that we have done since the beginning of the year, in calling them to come so that they feel a part of the process. When the parent doesn't feel part of the process, they feel so cut off that, what would they come for? So that they can tell them that the kid did everything bad? What are they going to come for? They don't come. And even more, the parents—but this is something that I did with the other teacher [of the grade-level]—parents start to cry and say, "Our children read more than us." There are parents that don't read and don't write. See? So, that's another reason parents don't come close. Because, you see, if you don't explain it, and if you don't make them part of it, the parents are on something else completely, from working all day and they have to feed the kid. They are focused on something else. (School Personnel 10)

In this instance, in working in collaboration with another member of the school personnel, this teacher was able to involve parents in the school in a positive way, allowing them to feel more connected to the educational processes of their children. Including parents in this way

also encouraged more open communication, which led to opportunities for teachers to be better informed and understand the realities of the communities of Latin American immigrant students and families at their schools, such as the limited literacy among the parent population.

Encouraging the awareness of equity-related issues. Direct acknowledgement of structural and social issues impact nondominant populations, such as Latin American immigrant students and families, was prioritized among other teachers of this subset as well. While each adapted their discussions of such topics according to the grade level they taught, they encouraged students to engage in these conversations to promote increased awareness among their families and others, even within the schools, that may have held discriminatory views toward nondominant groups. Take the following teacher, for example, who described her attempts to center students of Latin American immigrant families in their education after being asked if she changed her teaching when working with immigrant students:

> Un día [un estudiante argentino criollo] me dijo, "¿Por qué tenemos que saber el quechua, si en realidad lo más importante es saber el inglés?"…Yo le dije bueno que todos sus compañeros son de Bolivia y que la mayoría hablaban quechua. Y que así como ellos conocen cosas de acá, Argentina, también nosotros tenemos que conocer sus costumbres para tratar de conocernos más y que sé yo… Dijo como, bueno, no le parece importante para saber quechua, como que no le iba servir para nada…[Lo hago] para que ellos [los estudiantes inmigrantes] se sientan como protagonistas importantes en la educación. Siempre es como que se sienten muy marginados, ¿viste? Como darles el protagonismo.
>
> One day [an Argentine student of European descent] said to me, "Why do we have to know Quechua, when in reality English is the most important language to know?"…I told him that his fellow classmates are from Bolivia and that the majority spoke Quechua. And since they know things about Argentina, we should know things about their customs to try to know each other better. He said that it didn't seem very important to him to know Quechua, that it wasn't going to be useful to him…[I do it] so that they [immigrant students] feel like important protagonists in their education.

> It's always as if they feel very marginalized, see? To center them as protagonist. (School Personnel 11)

Despite the complaints of students of European descent in her class, this teacher reworked her curriculum to challenge norms that centered only certain students in Argentine public education and the discriminatory social hierarchies of Argentina she saw being reproduced among her students. In her class, she brought into question the valorization of Western languages and cultures through her continued inclusion of indigenous languages, Andean folklore, and other elements of the home culture of Latin American immigrant students, as well as through having discussions with students about these issues in Argentine society. She, like other teachers among this subset, capitalized on opportunities to engage in such topics with both students of Latin American immigrant families and white Argentine students. While here she mentioned a relatively mild conversation she had with a white Argentine student about the value of understanding the culture of nondominant groups, I witnessed her engagement in additional conversations around the importance of promoting the rights of Latin American immigrant communities, understanding the needs of immigrant students and parents, and problematizing discriminatory rhetoric promoted during political campaigns.

In addition to encouraging more critical conversations among students in their own classrooms, these school personnel also made attempts to push these conversations school-wide whenever possible. For instance, in *Escuela Andina*, several school personnel worked together to encourage a more complete presentation of Argentina's immigrant history, designing a series of projects across several grade levels to be displayed for all students to see. The projects included a focus on current Latin American immigrations to Argentina,

combating schools' tendency to focus primarily on the country's history of European migration (Novaro, 2005) (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6).

Figure 5.5. Student drawing of Andean and African immigrants boarding a bus bound for Argentina.

Figure 5.6. Student drawing of an Italian boat in route to Argentina.

Figure 5.7. Student drawing of Andean immigrant workers sewing garments.

Figure 5.8. Student drawing of a Peruvian immigrant selling flowers.

Through this project, school personnel also encouraged students to reflect on their own experiences, allowing students to participate in the construction of the representation of the lives of Latin American immigration populations in Argentina (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8). As seen in Figure 5.7 and 5.8, several students drew images of Latin American immigrants

engaging in forms of labor common among the community, such as sewing clothes and selling flowers. Several of these teachers encouraged their students to view the projects of other students, sparking dialogue around the diversity of Argentina's immigrant history throughout the school.

Expanding learning opportunities for Latin American immigrant students. Several school personnel among this subset also sought to address needs they saw as directly relevant to students of Latin American immigrant families, such as their limited exposure to environments beyond their neighborhoods.

> No conocen mucho más allá de este barrio. Es decir, por eso nosotros tratamos de sacarlos, y en esta escuela salimos *mucho* hacer visitas al resto de la ciudad a distintos lugares, porque si no, los chicos no conocen, no saben que hay más allá [del barrio], más allá de estas—ni siquiera de [este barrio], de estas cuadras, ¿no? Estas cuadras alrededor de la escuela.
>
> They don't know much beyond this neighborhood. That's why we try to get them out, and in this school we leave *a lot* to visit different places throughout the city, because if we don't the kids don't know what there is beyond [the neighborhood], beyond this—not even [this neighborhood], these blocks. These blocks around the school. (School Personnel 2)

As this member of the school personnel discussed, students, especially at *Escuela Andina* where there was a large Latin American immigrant population, rarely had the opportunity to explore other areas of the city. Consequently, a few teachers in the school organized regular fieldtrips to museums and other educational facilities to expose students to more of the city and provide them with a more equitable learning experience (see Figure 5.9 and 5.10).

Figure 5.9. Students from *Escuela Andina* on a fieldtrip to the *Museo Malvinas* (Malvinas Islands/Falkland Islands Museum). Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 22 May 2015.

Figure 5.10. Students from *Escuela Andina* on a fieldtrip to the *Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales* (Argentine Natural Sciences Museum). Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 16 September 2015.

School personnel also sought to make these fieldtrips as accessible as possible for all students regardless of their family's level of income, though they sometimes faced difficulty in receiving financial support from the schools or the district.

> Generalmente sale del bolsillo de los chicos, de los papás, de las familias. Ellos pagan el micro, pagan—tratamos de que vayan a lugares que no tengan que pagar, que sean gratis. Pero a veces no conseguimos—los lugares que necesitamos ir a conocer son pagos entonces los maestros empiezan con mucho tiempo de anticipación a pedir el dinero y juntarlo hasta logar tenerlo para la fecha que hay que salir.
>
> Generally it comes from the pockets of the kids, from the parents, from the families. They pay for the bus, they pay—we try to go to places where they don't have to pay, that are free. But sometimes we can't—the places that we need to go visit require admission fees so the teachers start asking for the money far in advance and collect it continuously until it's done so that it's there when it's time to go. (School Personnel 2)

As mentioned in this excerpt, keeping in mind that the fieldtrips could add up in cost for students and families, these school personnel tried to organized trips to public museums and centers that did not charge for admission. School personnel also sought funding from the city and the district in order to manage costs, such as for buses, and they took lunches and snacks provided by the schools[16] to be consumed during the fieldtrips. Furthermore, in instances when trips would require financial contributions from parents, they notified parents far in advance to ensure that families had sufficient time to collect the funds.

Working to accommodate Latin American immigrant families. In addition to attempting to organize fieldtrips in a way that would work for families, several teachers also found other ways to make certain school procedures function better for Latin American

[16]Snacks were provided for all students enrolled in public schools in Argentina every day. At schools with a *jornada completa*, or full-day schedule, breakfast and lunch were also provided.

immigrant students and families. Though school personnel were expected to uphold the structure and norms of the schools, this subset of teachers was active in seeking out solutions to discontinuities between school and home environments that had significant impacts on the educational experiences of students, such as communication between schools and parents.

> Yo no escribo mucho en los cuadernos. Me acomodé a la oralidad de ellos, porque, a ver, yo un día escribí en el cuaderno [de comunicado] algo y [un estudiante] me dijo, "Señora, no escribas así porque no te van a entender los padres…Con esas palabras no te van a entender." "Bueno, ¿en qué hacemos?" "Se lo decimos nosotros." Entonces yo me acomodé un poco a eso.
>
> I don't write very much in the [communication] notebooks. I've accommodated to the tendency to communicate through talking because, for example, one day I wrote something in a notebook and [a student] said to me, "Ma'am, don't write like that because my parents aren't going to understand you…They aren't going to understand you with those words." "Well, in what words do we do it?" "We say it like this." So I accommodated that a little. (School Personnel 1)

Here, a teacher described an example of moment when dialogue with a student, which involved listening to the student and incorporating his ideas to better meet his and his family's needs, led to improvements in her understanding of effective ways of communicating with Latin American immigrant students and parents. Rather than seeing this accommodation as a burden or a result of some deficiency on the part of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant communities, she presented it as a minor change in her practices.

The communication notebooks to which this teacher referred were the primary source of informational exchanges between the schools and parents, though most school personnel complained bitterly about parents' lack of engagement with the notebook. Nonetheless, schools persisted in relying heavily on the notebooks to disseminate

information, citing its essential role and history in the Argentine school system. While most school personnel placed blame on parents for not doing as the schools expected, these teachers minimized their use of the communication notebooks and instead sought to maximize direct interactions with parents. Though their opportunities to interact face-to-face with parents were limited just as they are for other school personnel, these teachers found ways to touch base with families even if just for a few minutes by engaging in practices such as greeting parents at the beginning and end of school days, arranging meetings at times that were most convenient for parents, providing their cell phone numbers to parents so that they could call during their downtime, and occasionally meeting outside of the school.

Chapter Conclusion

Ultimately, while there were commonalities among teachers of this subset, each had unique combinations of approaches to addressing the needs of students and families in more democratic ways than generally undertaken by the majority of school personnel. This points to a crucial component of democratic education and critical pedagogy: there is no one-size-fits-all solution. While they engaged in some forms of recognition of the heritage of Latin American immigrant students and families as was promoted by schools, these school personnel extended these practices further to engage in humanizing forms of education that moved beyond superficial multiculturalism in ways that worked best given the circumstances of individual students and their families. At the foundation of these practices was a continued dedication to create the most equitable schooling environments possible for nondominant populations, such as Latin American immigrant students and families.

Key elements to their approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families were relationship building, collaboration, and a recognition of systemic issues that impacted the experiences of nondominant populations in the schools, in Argentina, and throughout the world. Their practices included: ensuring parents were invited into the construction of the educational experiences of their children beginning early in their schooling; supporting students in the development of educational content based on their lived experiences; working with other school personnel and families to expand educational opportunities; and adapting common school practices to better fit the realities of students and families. Many also voluntarily enrolled in additional training and coursework related to understanding the experiences of nondominant student populations, and as a result their practices continued to evolve even over the course of my fieldwork. In the end, their commitment to critical forms of education resulted in a clearer understanding of the realities of families, better relationships, and more equitable educational experiences for students of Latin American immigrant families.

VI: Formal and Informal Educational Policy Impacting Latin American Immigrant Families and Schools

At both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, when talking to teachers directly, all strongly supported the importance of public education. For a country plagued with a history of political and economic instability, public education had provided a constancy that was otherwise absent in moments of crisis.

> La escuela, cuando fue una gran crisis del neoliberalismo después del Menem, [sostuvo] a la familia…En los colegios les daban de comer a los chicos, se los tenían cuidados. Incluso algunos de los papas han comido en los colegios…Fue prácticamente la única institución que sobrevivió porque la iglesia también está condenada, los sindicatos están condenados, los políticos y todas las instituciones del gobierno están condenadas, los militares están condenados, los policías están condenados. Sí, a la sociedad no cree a nadie. La única organización salvo algunas instituciones religiosas entre todo de cualquier religión y algunas asociaciones civiles que mantuvieron un poco de eso. El país está en medio de desolación total. Entonces si no hubiera sido por estas instituciones, en particular la escuela, el país también pudiera caído en una guerra civil.
>
> When the great neoliberal crisis happened after Menem, [17] schools [sustained] the family…In schools they provided food to children, they took care of them, and even some parents ate at the schools…It was the only institution that survived because the [Catholic] Church was also condemned, the labor unions were condemned, the politicians and all of the government institutions were condemned, the military was condemned, the police were condemned. Society didn't believe anyone. [It was the] only organization besides a few religious institutions and some civil associations that were relatively maintained. The country was in the midst of total desolation. So if it hadn't been for these institutions, the school system in particular, the country could have fallen into civil war. (School Personnel 9)

As highlighted by this teacher, despite ruptures in other public institutions in the past, public education had survived during even the most trying of times. Public schools were often

[17] Carlos Menem was President of Argentina from 1989-1999. His administration received heavy criticism, as his support of neoliberal policies led to the widespread privatization of public goods. Following his term, Argentina faced a severe economic recession.

sanctuaries for the most vulnerable of Argentines of the past, elevating the importance of public education in the national consciousness. Though private schools were still typically viewed as superior to public schools in terms of quality, there was a high level of awareness of the role public schools had played in Argentine history. Consequently, at both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, school personnel tended to view themselves as providers of a public good and were passionate about their commitment to working in public education rather than seeking out more gainful employment in the private sector.

However, despite the commitment of school personnel to supporting public schools to ensure educational access to all Argentines, there were several formal and informal institutional policies that negatively impacted Latin American immigrant students and families in their interactions with the public school system. In some instances, these were federal and city-level educational policies, and in others, they were informal policies put in place by school administrators or developed over time to manage how the schools ran on a daily basis. Though school personnel were unsure of the origin of many policies, they nonetheless were expected to carry them out, and through the upholding of these policies, Latin American immigrants were systematically positioned as racial, cultural, and national "others," leading to the development of barriers that disproportionately impacted them over white Argentines. They included the treating of an Argentine public education as a gift to Latin American immigrant students and families, lack of institutional flexibility, and positioning of parents as a threat to the schools.

Centering of White, Native Argentine Students and Families

Public education as a gift to Latin American immigrants. At *Escuela European* and *Escuela Adina*, the needs and desires of white Argentine students and parents often were held as a greater priority for schools to address, resulting in informal policies centered around responding to them over Latin American immigrant students and families. While white, native Argentines were seen as the rightful recipients of an Argentine education, the education Latin American students received was often treated as a gift from the state. On several occasions, this came through in comments from school personnel, many of whom viewed Latin American immigrant students and families as expecting the state to provide them with everything.

> La familia no se hace cargo. La escuela se hace cargo. Entonces la escuela llama psicólogos, el psicopedagogo. Le pone una maestra para que ayude a recuperar, como [Student 7]…La familia no se ocupa de [Student 7]. La escuela se ocupa de [Student 7]. Entonces me da la sensación como que la familia vuelca todo en la escuela, y la familia se dedica a otra cosa, que es *trabajar, progresar, mandar plata a Bolivia, comprarse una camioneta, comprar un terreno*. Y todo le dejan a la escuela. Le dejan los libros, el sándwich, la computadora, la maestra. Esa sensación que antes no pasaba.
>
> The families don't take responsibility. The school takes responsibility. So the school calls psychologists, the educational psychologist, they put them with teachers to help them catch up, as with [Student 7]. The family doesn't take care of [Student 7]. The school takes care of [Student 7]. So it gives me the sensation that the family puts everything on the school, and the family dedicates itself to something else, which is *working, progressing, sending money to Bolivia, buying a pickup truck, buying land*. And they leave everything to the school. They leave the books, the sandwich, the computer, the teacher. That didn't happen before. (School Personnel 7)

As seen in the previous excerpt, rather than being framed as a right of everyone living in Argentina, Latin American immigrant families expecting common elements of an Argentine public education such as books, lunch, a computer, and teachers were seen as abusing public

resources. Consequently, those who expressed dissatisfaction with the schools or did not assimilate to dominant cultural norms were seen as ungrateful and irresponsible. By bringing their character into question into question, schools effectively removed any legitimacy of the concerns of Latin American immigrant students and families. Over time, this served to silence Latin American immigrant parents and students, as their efforts to influence schools to better meet their needs were met with hostility.

When individual efforts were unsuccessful, Latin American immigrant parents were left with little leverage to have their concerns addressed, as organizing groups of people of similar backgrounds to advocate for the rights of the community can be especially difficult in the context of migration (Falicov, 2007). At *Escuela Europea* in particular where students of Latin American immigrant families were a minority, there were sometimes efforts by white Argentine parents to mitigate this by stepping in to defend Latin American immigrant students and parents. However, these moments were rare, and the need for such involvement from the dominant group demonstrated the elevated status of white, native Argentines compared to Latin American immigrant students and families.

> Tuve una experiencia con una alumna que es boliviana, ella y su familia, y que una colega dijo, porque ella no trajo el trabajo, no sé, que dijo "Ah, andáte a tu país," no sé qué, y vinieron papás de otros chicos. Y los papás de la nena también, pero la movilización empezó por los papás de los otros chicos. Entonces hay papás que forman parte de un grupo de lo que podríamos llegar a decir "las familias tradicionales," pero hay un otro grupo en esta escuela en particular, que son profesionales algunos, que también apuestan la educación pública.
>
> I had an experience with a student, she and her family are Bolivian, and a fellow teacher said, because [the student] didn't bring her homework, [the teacher] said, "Ah, go back to your country" or something like that, and the parents of other students came. And the parents of the student too, but the protest was started by the parents of other children. So there are parents that form part of the group of what we

> could call “traditional families,” but there is another group in this school in particular who are professionals that also support public education. (School Personnel 3)

The incident this teacher described in which white Argentine parents who believed strongly in public education came to the school to defend a Latin American immigrant student was indicative of the growing consciousness of the hardships Latin American immigrant families faced in dealing with public institutions in Argentina. In this instance, after gaining the support of native Argentine parents, the school listened to the complaint and the teacher apologized. However, the majority of white Argentine parents, described here as “traditional families,” tended to ignore such instances or support the school in whatever manner it had chosen to respond to Latin American immigrant students and families. Consequently, the schools’ informal policy of responding to white Argentine families but not Latin American immigrant families limited the ability of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families to engage with schools and ensure an equitable educational experience for their children.

Requirement of sensitive information. The centering of white, native Argentines, especially of the middle and upper classes, was also evident in educational policies that required families to provide sensitive information to schools, reinforcing which students were seen as deserving of being there and which were not. Though tensions surrounding the issue of deservingness typically only became explicitly visible in moments of conflict between schools and Latin American immigrant students and families, there were constant silent reminders of which students the schools were “supposed to” serve, such as in the schools’ requirement of federally-issued identification numbers (referred to as a *DNI*), country of birth, and parental occupations. These seemingly benign policies hit Bolivian,

Peruvian, and Paraguayan families especially hard, highlighting the intersection of race, class, and nationality in the treatment of Latin American immigrant populations.

Despite federal policy ensuring the right to public education regardless of immigration status (Dirección Nacional de Migraciones, 2010), schools continued to require families to provide a *DNI*, and country of birth for parents and students, with no indication of their right to receive a formal education even without formal documentation to reside in Argentina. The requirement of this information on official school documents, such as enrollment paperwork and fieldtrip permission slips, placed some Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families in vulnerable positions, as they represented a large portion of immigrants living in Argentina without formal documentation.

Furthermore, like the requirement of *DNI* and country of birth, the requirement of occupational information for parents put Latin American immigrant students and families in a precarious position, as many in the undocumented community of Latin American immigrants worked in the underground textile industry of Buenos Aires, making their employment illegal.

> Hay chicos que son hijos de papás que laburan en estas cuestiones de textiles, ¿viste?, que hay acá. Tienen a veces un silencio marginal por el tema de la indocumentación.
>
> There are kids here that are the children of parents that work in the textile industry. Sometimes they are marginalized into silence as a result of being undocumented. (School Personnel 3)

Some of the teachers who had strong relationships with families knew of Latin American immigrant students and parents at the schools who were residing in Buenos Aires without formal documentation and working in the textile industry, but this was rarely discussed.

Several students also mentioned their families being in such circumstances during interviews, and several of the students' photo projects (see Chapter 3) revealed textile workshops in their homes or the homes of family members. Because of their high level of fear surrounding potential consequences, such as fines, imprisonment, or deportation, their interview information and photos will not be shared. Nonetheless, their concern for their families' wellbeing reflected the sensitive nature of immigration status and informal forms of employment among the Latin American immigrant community, especially as the city's then-mayor Mauricio Macri had publicly demonized Latin American immigrants to Argentina and begun to encourage the deportation of undocumented immigrants.

Enrollment policies favoring white, native Argentines. For Latin American immigrant communities, relocating to Buenos Aires was a costly endeavor, especially considering that many moved from rural areas to the city in pursuit of greater economic resources. In order to be able to maintain their households, many Latin American immigrants relocated to Greater Buenos Aires but lived just outside of the official city limits in *Provincia* (see Chapter 3 for map). This allowed them access to affordable housing, food, and other general services outside of the city limits while also maintaining access to more lucrative employment and essential services that were of better quality within the city, such as public schools. Being located on the very edge of the city limits, *Escuela Andina* and *Escuela Europea* often served students and families living in such situations, with some students traveling as far as three hours from *Provincia* to have access to schools within the city.

The school enrollment policy, in accordance with regulations put in place by the city government, gave priority to students living within 10 blocks of the schools and to those with siblings already enrolled (Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2015). However, because of their financial need to live outside of the city, many Latin American immigrants had to live further than 10 blocks from the schools within the city, and given that they were relocating from another country, it was rare that they already had siblings attending schools in the city. School administrations ultimately made the final determination as to whether or not students living outside of the 10-block radius were able to enroll, leaving the access of Latin American immigrant students to a higher quality education to the will of a small group of white, native Argentines. According to teachers from both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina, Escuela Europea* was known for using this policy to filter its student population so that it continued to be comprised primarily of white, native Argentine students. Consequently, Latin American immigrant students and families were not guaranteed fair treatment in the enrollment process, and few were able to enter the school.

Lack of Institutional Flexibility

In addition to schools giving priority to white, native Argentine families over Latin American immigrant families through formal and informal policies impacting their enrollment and reception within schools, the rigid design of the public school system of Buenos Aires also placed white, native Argentine families, especially those of the middle and upper classes, at an advantage. Little consideration was given to the ways in which the realities of Latin American immigrant families may have influenced their needs and forms of engagement with their children's education. This was evident in the limited availability of

school personnel to meet with parents, the stance of schools toward child labor, the schools' narrow interpretation of what constituted a family unit, and the school system's approach to the maintenance of student educational technology. Through the enforcement of formal and informal policies related to these issues, low-income Latin American immigrant families were placed at a disadvantage throughout the educational system.

Limited availability of school personnel. A major issue with the structure of the public school system that disproportionately burdened Latin American immigrant families was the schools' expectation for parents to engage with school personnel only during the limited hours permitted by the school. The school administrations set fixed schedules for the hours when parents were allowed to come into the school to meet with school personnel, and parents were often turned away and told to return during the scheduled hours if they came to the school outside of that window of time. Because these permitted hours took place during the school day, they often overlapped with the workday of parents. Even for white Argentine parents, the times in which they were allowed to meet with school personnel were inconvenient, as only a select few hours were established during the week to meet with families.

> Tampoco vienen tantos porque están trabajando la mayoría de los padres, que no es fácil salir del trabajo para venir a un taller en la escuela en un horario que son normalmente del trabajo. Son muy pocos que vienen, que vienen de todos los colegios.
>
> Not many parents come because the majority of the parents are working, and it's not easy to leave work to come to a workshop at the school during a schedule that normally overlaps with work. There aren't many that come, that come from any of the schools. (School Personnel 9)

Despite the meeting schedules of the schools being inconvenient for most parents, the general expectation was that parents request time off work to meet with school personnel during the hours established by schools since this was the only time for which school personnel were compensated.

The expectation that parents take time off work was not realistic for Latin American immigrant parents in particular given that many worked under exploitative or unstable conditions of employment. Some teachers worked to make themselves more available to parents, but those teachers were well aware that they were in the minority in their commitment to working with parents to find times to meet, as this was not a practice required or promoted by the schools.

> Bueno, la medida que puedan venir, que vengan cuando puedan. ¿Viste? Está bien. No es lo que corresponde, que uno les da un horario, ¿Qué se yo? Pero, bueno, a veces los padres no pueden venir en la hora que elegís. Entonces, bueno, como más flexible…Si no, no vienen. Es la única forma. O la entrada, o a la salida. ¿Viste el horario? La mayoría trabaja, y si le pones una reunión a las 3:30 de la tarde no pueden venir ni uno. Es la verdad. Y no te dan el permiso en los trabajos para faltar. Si trabajas en un taller o en la calle o lo que sea, no puedes caer un puesto. ¿Viste? O en el taller, y decirle al que te esté explotando, "Señor explotador, espere que voy a dejar todo, que la escuela me está llamando."
>
> Well, they [parents] come whenever they can. It's fine. It's not what's considered appropriate, that you give them an open schedule [to come]. But, well, sometimes parents can't come during the time you choose. So, [this is] more flexible…If not, they don't come. It's the only way. Or at the beginning of the school day, or at the end. Have you seen the schedule? The majority work, and if you schedule a meeting at 3:30 in the afternoon, not even one can come. If you work in a sweatshop or on the street or whatever, you can't breakdown a kiosk. Or in the sweatshop, you can't say to the one who is exploiting you, "Sir exploiter, wait while I leave everything, the school is calling me." (School Personnel 10)

In this excerpt, a teacher explained how she arranged times to meet with parents, taking into consideration the conditions under which Latin American immigrant parents often had to

work. As she highlighted here, providing more flexibility to parents to meet with her when they could, though not considered appropriate by the school and other personnel, allowed for more interactions with families. She also regularly made efforts to wait for parents by the school door when they dropped off or picked up their children. Nonetheless, even though this teacher and a few other at the schools worked to create as much time as possible for parents, the policies regulating the availability of teachers and the limited hours for which school personnel were compensated left little time for them to work with parents.

Limited collaboration. At both *Escuela Andina* and *Escuela Europea*, a number of school personnel complained about the lack of a collaborative environment within their schools. This applied to collaboration among school personnel, as well as with the local community. Because of this lack of coordinated efforts, school personnel were not able to learn from each other effectively or work together to plan related activities across disciplines and grade levels to provide students with a stable educational experience, and schools often found themselves in conflictive situations with the Latin American immigrant community.

Lack of collaboration among school personnel. At both of the schools, several teachers noted the limited collaboration among school personnel. As multiple teachers pointed out, the lack of collaboration among school personnel limited the ability of teachers engaged in critical education to generate changes beyond their classrooms.

> El problema es esto, de que se trabaja muy individualmente las escuelas, los maestros, pero para mí es un problema de las conducciones de las escuelas. Como deberían trabajar más integralmente. Entonces, al trabajarse más individualmente, depende mucho del maestro que te toca y no debería ser así.
>
> The problem is that the schools and the teachers work very individually, but to me it's a problem with the way the schools work. Like they should work more integrally.

> So, because they work so individually, it depends a lot on the teacher you have and it shouldn't be like this. (School Personnel 11)

As this teacher stated, there was minimal collaboration within schools, leaving teachers to work alone. As a result, the experiences of students, especially those of nondominant populations as this teacher discussed, varied greatly from one teacher to the next based on that individual teacher's investment, or lack thereof, in seeking out information and training related to their needs.

Even during instances when teachers could have worked together, this rarely came to pass because the school administrations did not provide much practical support for such efforts. One teacher discussed this issue in terms of a yearly project in which teachers were supposed to design and execute a plan focused on a specific topic:

> Todas las escuelas tienen un proyecto por año de una temática. Se supone que la tenemos que hacer los maestros, junto con la conducción, pero no sucedió. Lo hizo la conducción, y nos avisó. Se supone que es una construcción colectiva, que no sucede. Entonces, está bueno que esto sea como algo que unifique criterios entre todos los maestros, pero no sucede—la verdad.
>
> All of the schools have a themed project each year. The teachers are supposed to do it, together with the administration, but that didn't happen. The administration did it, and they told us about it. It's supposed to be a collective effort, which didn't happen. So, it's good that this should be something that standardizes guidelines among all of the teachers, but that doesn't happen honestly. (School Personnel 11)

Rather than working with school personnel as the project was designed, the school's administration designed the project for teachers to carry out. While a few teachers formed smaller groups and used their planning periods and personal time to coordinate educational activities and materials, most only minimally engaged with the project, leaving their students with less instruction around the project theme.

This lack of collaboration also proved to be a hindrance to teachers engaged in critical education in encouraging other teachers to approach working with students and parents of Latin American immigrant backgrounds in a more humanizing and holistic way. Consequently, while on the surface some activities seemed to promote equity, little came from superficial attempts, which the same teacher discussed as similar to laws that are not enforced.

> Es como las leyes. Como que existen leyes y que no se llevan a cabo, bueno, pase lo escrito a la realidad. Vos puedes escribir un montón de cosas, pero si después queda allí, no tiene mucho sentido, como esto.
>
> It's like laws. Like laws exist and what's written never happens in reality. You can write a ton of things, but if it stays at that, it doesn't mean much, like this [project]. (School Personnel 11)

As this teacher described, while the project appeared to promote equity, collaborative efforts to implement improved strategies for working with Latin American immigrant students and families systematically were rarely supported or implemented by the administration.

Lack of collaboration with the Latin American immigrant community. In addition to rarely encouraging collaboration among school personnel, schools also rarely encouraged collaboration with the local Latin American immigrant community. This limited collaboration resulted in a combative relationship between schools and the local community, especially at *Escuela Andina*, which was located in the heart of commerce activities of the Latin American immigrant community. While in the past the school had worked closely with the community, even sometimes sharing space in the school with a local immigrant rights organization and involving students in the group's activities, over time this relationship had broken down. Several teachers discussed the new administration as being

especially disinvested in the Latin American immigrant students and parents of the school, leaving an even greater rift between the school and the local community.

> Yo veo como que la directora no le interesa…No le gusta la comunidad. Está acá porque tiene que estar porque en este sistema público, ósea, vos tenés que estar por allí en un lugar que no te gusta para después ir a uno que sí te gusta…Entonces ella está acá. No le gusta estar acá, porque la escucho. Critica a la escuela, critica a los alumnos, critica a los padres, pero bueno tiene que estar porque no le queda otra. Pero ya cuando pueda, se va a ir. Entonces no le importa la escuela…No está haciendo nada.
>
> I see that the principal isn't interested in them…She doesn't like the community. She's here because she has to be here because in this public system you have to be in a place you don't like in order to later go to one you do like…So she's here. She doesn't like being here, because I hear her [talk about it]. She criticizes the school, she criticizes the students, she criticizes parents, but she has to be here because there isn't another option. But when she can, she will leave. So she doesn't care about the school…She's not doing anything. (School Personnel 7)

As this teacher discussed, the school's principal was not invested in working with the Latin American immigrant community of the area. However, in the Argentine school system, preference was given to more experienced school personnel for vacant positions, and therefore those that were new to their careers, such as the school's principal, tended to be placed in school considered less desirable. Consequently, despite her lack of interest in working with the Latin American immigrant community, the principal had to work at *Escuela Andina* because there were no other options for her at that time. This lack of commitment to the local community did little to encourage a healthy relationship between the school and the community.

One of the most contentious issues between the school and the community was the use of the sidewalks immediately in front of the school. In years past, the sidewalk in front of the school had been utilized by street vendors, just as any of the other public sidewalk in

the neighborhood. Given the heavy flow of foot traffic around the school, street vendors would set up stands, such as those used for making juice, cooking food, or selling clothes, all the way up to the entrance to maximize the potential for selling their goods. However, this caused difficulty for students trying to enter and leave the school, which made for potentially unsafe conditions in the case of an emergency (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2).

Figure 6.1 Andean immigrant merchants selling food and other goods along sidewalks in the schools' neighborhood. Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 21 December 2015.

Figure 6.2 Latin American immigrant workers with food carts in the neighborhood. Pictured here are a woman selling juice (left) and community members eating from a nearby food cart (right). Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 21 December 2015.

The school's administration attempted to address this situation by keeping the sidewalks clear, but the manner in which this was done created conflict with the local Latin American immigrant community. A member of the school's administration mentioned this conflict to me by describing the situation in terms of the Latin American immigrant community not supporting the school. However, a teacher explained the situation somewhat differently:

> El problema es el diálogo…Entonces, la mitigación de riesgos plantea que, si los chicos tienen que salir ordenadamente, como plantea el esquema de salida, hay problemas en la vereda. ¿Por qué? Porque las estufas y las cocinas podrían, una vez salvado el pibe del fuego dentro de la escuela, podría lastimarse con esas estufas y cocinas, que de hecho es real. Y no solamente eso, la entrada, la salida. Entonces, lo que hizo fue enojarse mucho y obligarlos a no estar en la puerta de la escuela en toda la vereda de la escuela…Pero, bueno, en la vereda hoy, en la entrada y la salida, a pesar de que no están las cocinas, hay conflicto en el traslado de mercadería comestible. Es tan grande. Viene con gran [ollas], que pasan por la puerta y los

> chicos chiquitos están saliendo. Entonces hay ollas, van con ollas gigantes que las transportan de un negocio de la esquina donde lo cocinan a la venta de la otra esquina en forma. Llevan las ollas calientes. Entonces esos por allí son observaciones que se hacen de este lado de la comunidad decir, "No cuidan a los chicos."
>
> The problem is with dialogue…So the mitigation of risks establishes that, if the kids have to leave in an orderly manner as it's laid out in the exit plan, there are problems on the sidewalk. Why? Because the cookers and stoves could, once the kid is saved from the fire inside of the school, could hurt him- or herself on one of the cookers or the stoves, which is real. And it's not just that, but also entering and exiting [the school]. So, what she did was get really mad and force them not to be outside the door of the school on any of the sidewalk in front of the school…But, well, on the sidewalks today, even though there aren't stoves, there is conflict because the carts contain combustible materials. They are so large. They come with large pots, and they pass by the door and the kids are coming out. So there are pots, they pass by with gigantic pots that they transport from a business on the corner where they cook [the food] to the other corner where they sell it. They carry hot pots. So those are the observations that [the administration] uses to say, "They don't care for the kids." (School Personnel 1)

As this teacher highlighted, rather than working with the local community to develop a joint solution to the issue of safety in front of the school that still allowed for community members to engage in commerce activities, the administration enacted a policy that prohibited any community members from setting up stands outside of the school. However, this created conflict with the local Latin American immigrant community and ultimately did little to rectify concerns regarding the safety of students. Vendors still needed to pass through the sidewalk in front of the schools to get access to the areas where they sold their food, meaning hot cooking vessels were regularly transported back and forth in front of the school. Consequently, the issue was not resolved completely, and hostility lingered between the local community and the school.

Conceptualization of the family unit. Another policy-related issue that impacted Latin American immigrant students and parents was the public school system's narrow

conceptualization of the family unit. Among white, native Argentines, the family unit was generally thought of as two parents or legal guardians and their children. However, among local Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant communities, the family unit also was expanded to include extended family members, friends, and neighbors, and these individuals, as well as older siblings, often carried out essential roles within the family unit. Though teachers engaged in critical education recognized the salient role of other family members in the lives of many Latin American immigrant students and worked with these family members when parents were unavailable, this was not the policy of the schools, and therefore these teachers were often working outside what was considered the appropriate way to interact with families. This difference in the conceptualization of the family unit worked against Latin American immigrant students and parents in the schools' regulations regarding who was allowed to pick students up from school, as well as the schools' stance toward child labor.

Regulations on student drop-off and pick-up. At both of *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, with the exception of the older students who could walk home, parents were expected to drop off their children for school before leaving for work in the morning and pick them up at the entryway at the end of the school day. Though some families were able to develop a strategy to comply with the schools' policy, many Latin American immigrant families relied on other family members to assist in taking the children to school and picking them up in order to attend to other obligations, such as those for work or the family. Given that many worked in exploitative and unstable employment as mentioned

previously, assistance from other family members and friends was essential to ensure their children's educational needs were met.

J: ¿Y cómo llegan ustedes cuando vienen a la escuela? Porque me dijiste que no se puede caminar, ¿no?	J: And how do you get to school when you come? Because you told me you can't walk, right?
S8: No…Algunas veces nos lleva mi mamá. Es así: mi mamá nos lleva, y mi tío nos retira. Lo hacemos así.	S8: No...Sometimes my mom brings me. It's like this: my mom brings up, and my uncle picks us up. We do it like this.
J: ¿Tu madre te busca en la puerta? ¿O tu hermana?	J: Does your mom pick you up at the door? Or your sister?
S7: Mi hermano me busca porque mi hermana tiene que trabajar, y mi otra hermana se quede en casa y cuida a su hija.	S7: My brother comes to get me because my sister has to work, and my other sister stays home to take care of her daughter.

Nonetheless, despite many Latin American immigrant students relying on several family members to support their education, schools continued to promote a narrow image of the family unit, and school policy was slow to catch up to the needs of the community. Though individual teachers sometimes took into consideration a broader view of the family unit to better serve Latin American immigrant students, many school personnel complained of Latin American immigrant parents not following the rules of the school regarding student drop-off and pick-up.

Stance of schools toward child labor. Another issue related to the schools' narrow view of the family unit was the schools' approach to child labor, which impacted the schools' relationship with Latin American immigrant parents. At *Escuela Europea,* the issue of child labor was generally ignored, though it was known by a few school personnel that some students of Latin American immigrant families worked in order to help provide

financially for their families. At *Escuela Andina*, however, where the Latin American immigrant student population was much larger, the issue of child labor was addressed explicitly by the school, sometimes generating combative environments surrounding the issue.

The situation related to child labor was complex, as definitions of child labor and laws regarding the issue vary between countries. At *Escuela Andina*, both parents and school personnel appeared to have little knowledge of these laws in either Argentina[18] or the surrounding Latin American countries. This became evident during a meeting between teachers and parents that started as a conversation about diversity in educational environments but turned into a heated debate among parents regarding whether or not children were allowed to work under the new guidelines for the employment of minors in Bolivia.[19] Nonetheless, despite not having much clarity around the technicalities of what constituted child labor, school personnel generally took a firm stance against it, criticizing

[18] In 2008, Argentina raised its minimum age of employment from 14 years to 16 years with the passage of Law Nº 26.390. In documents produced by UNICEF Argentina, the country had previously established the legal working age as 14 years due to an "insufficiently developed" economy and education, which they argued had since been "overcome" (UNICEF, 2009, p. 11).

[19] In 2014, Bolivian President Evo Morales made changes to the legislation regarding the employment of children and youth in the country. Law No. 548 was met with mixed opinions, as it lowered the eligible age of employment to 10 years ("Nuevo código," 2014). According to supporters, the lowering of the age was to meet the reality of the need for children to contribute financially in low-income families in Bolivia. The logic was that before the changes, young children were working just the same, but they were not protected like other workers because their employment was illegal. This left them in vulnerable positions without a legal framework to demand fair treatment by their employers. With the changes to the law, children 10 years or older were able to undertake any of the same avenues to fight exploitation as adult workers and were guaranteed the same rights.

parents who they saw as abusing their children for having them engage in economic activities.

This firm stance in combination with their having little understanding of the definitions of child labor resulted in attempts at addressing the issue that, although likely well-intended, appeared to do little to tackle the problem and a lot drive a wedge between the school and Latin American immigrant families. For instance, school personnel at *Escuela Andina* hung a poster made by teachers and students of early grade levels directly beside the front entrance of the school that, on bright yellow paper, boasted the reason "children don't have to work" (see Figure 6.3).

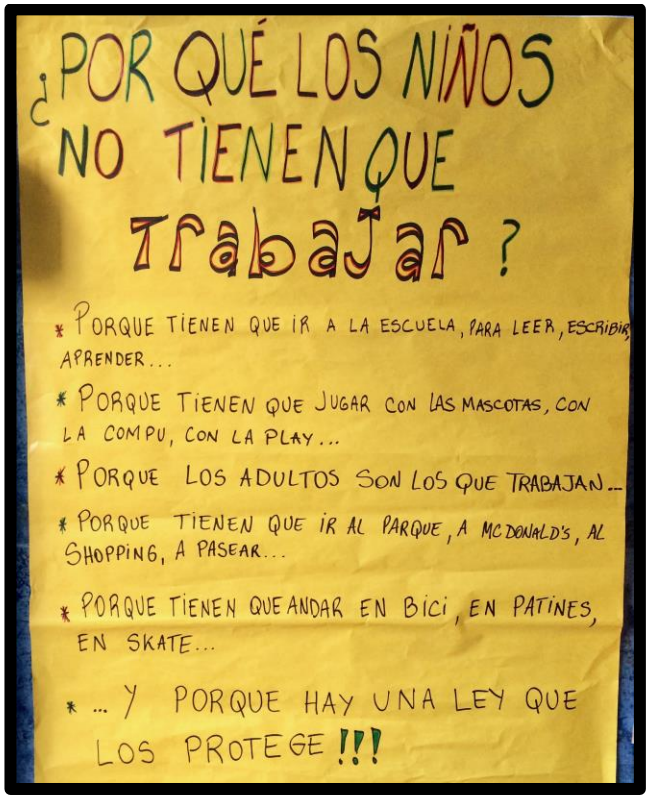


Figure 6.3. School poster: "¿Por qué los niños no tienen que trabajar?" ("Why don't children have to work?") It reads, "Why don't children have to work? Because they have to go to school to be able to read, write, learn… Because they have to play with pets, with the

computer, with the PlayStation… Because adults are the ones who work… Because they have to go to the park, to McDonald's, to the mall, to walk around… Because they have to ride bikes, roller skate, skateboard… And because there is a law the protects them!!!"[20]
Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 12 May 2015.

The poster listed several other activities in which children should engage rather than working. However, it did not define what was considered child labor or explain the laws regarding the employment of children in Argentina, nor did it address the poverty-related causes that sometimes did lead Latin American immigrant students to working under exploitative conditions.

Though not explicitly included in the poster, over the course of the year, school personnel shared their views on child labor. Ultimately, the ways in which school personnel discussed what they considered child labor were generally centered around views common among white, middle-class Argentines. For instance, though home activities such as washing dishes, caring for siblings, and cooking generally were seen as basic elements of family participation among the Latin American immigrant community, school personnel often treated them as child labor.

> Estos nenes salen de acá y *van a cuidar a los hermanos*, o ayudan a la familia con *la costura*, o ayudan a limpiar, ordenar, a cocinar. Cuidan a sus hermanitos. Tienen otros roles en la familia que hace que, bueno, se termina la escuela y ahora se tiene ocupar de otra cosa. Tienen una vida un poco dura a veces estos nenes.
>
> These kids leave here and *they go take care of their siblings*, or they help their families with *sewing*, or they help clean, organize, to cook. They take care of their younger siblings. They have other roles in their families that make it so that, well,

[20] The original text read: "Porque tienen que ir a la escuela, para leer, escribir, aprender…Porque tienen que jugar con las mascotas, con la compu, con la *play*…Porque los adultos son los que trabajan…Porque tienes que ir al parque, a McDonald's, al *shopping*, a pasear…Porque tienen que andar en bici, en patines, en *skate*…Y porque hay una ley que los protege!!!"

> school ends and then they have to take care of other things. These kids have a very difficult life sometimes. (School Personnel 7)

As seen in this teacher's comment regarding Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students, school personnel saw home activities as causing Latin American immigrant students having "difficult lives." Rather than seeing these activities as contributing to the family unit, there was an implication that Latin American immigrant parents were asking too much of their children.

Latin American immigrant students helping their parents with activities related to their work also was quickly labeled "child labor," regardless of the context. While the school's reason for working to combat child labor likely stemmed from a desire to protect students from harmful conditions that might have put their wellbeing or education at risk, little consideration appeared to be given to the variability in what types of economic activities Latin American students engaged and under what circumstances.

J: ¿Ayudas un poquito con el negocio entonces?	J: Do you help a little with the business?
S8: (Con orgullo) Sí.	S8: (With pride) Yes.
J: ¿Trabajas mucho allá o solamente cuando necesitan algo extra o cómo es?	J: Do you work there a lot or just when they need a little extra help or how is it?
S9: Siempre, todos los días, pero menos los sábados y los domingos. Descansamos. Yo le ayudo atender el kiosco a veces, y a veces no porque tengo que hacer la tarea.	S8: Always, every day, but less on Saturday and Sunday. We rest. I help at the convenience store sometimes, and sometimes I don't because I have to do homework.
J: ¿Vas en la mañana o vas después de la escuela?	J: Do you go in the morning or do you go after school?
S8: (Riéndose) No, voy en la tarde.	S8: (Laughing) No, I go in the afternoon.
J: (Riéndose) Duermes en la mañana, ¿no?	

S8: (Riéndose) Síiiii.	J: (Laughing) You sleep in the morning, don't you?
	S8: (Laughing) Yeeees.

As in the case of the Latin American immigrant student from this interview excerpt, among Latin American immigrant families, children generally only helped with economic activities as long as it did not interfere with school-related obligations. Furthermore, they tended to focus on helping the children develop important skills for future employment, such as this student's learning to run her parents' convenience store. Though there were instances of child labor in the schools that did place children at risk, these were extremely rare, and schools did not work with individual families to help parents find alternative solutions to meet their families' financial needs.

Maintenance of student educational technology. In addition to the limited flexibility of schools through the availability of school personnel, limited collaboration, and maintaining a narrow conceptualization of the family unit, the rigidity of the public education system was also evident the schools' approach to the maintenance of student technology. Throughout the City of Buenos Aires, students enrolled in public schools were provided a laptop computer as early as primary school. Known as *Plan S@rmiento*, the objective of the program was "to promote quality education with equal opportunities and possibilities, and to favor socio-educational inclusion"[21] ("Plan S@rmiento BA," n.d.). Though the computers had the potential to bring access to technology to students who

[21] Author translation. The original text in Spanish read: "promover la calidad educativa con igualdad de oportunidades y posibilidades, y favorecer la inclusión socio-educativa."

otherwise may not have such an opportunity, receiving technical support was a constant struggle for families, especially those with limited financial resources.

> No es fácil porque los papás no tienen teléfono de línea. Entonces llaman por celular. El celular, por cinco minutos, te cobran cincuenta pesos. El teléfono es gratis, pero el teléfono es de línea. De todos los papás de la otra escuela, ningunos tienen teléfono de línea. Entonces, si tienen que estar llamado a suporte técnico, gastan una fortuna. Y el soporte técnico le tienen dando vueltas, preguntando a ver esto, a vero esto y lo otro. También una nena me dijo, "Mi mama se cansó de estar llamando al soporte. Jamás no llama."
>
> It's not easy because the parents don't have landlines. So they call by cellphones. For five minutes on a cellphone, it costs fifty *pesos*. It's free by landline. Of all the parents at the school, none has a landline. So, if they have to start calling technical support, they spend a fortune. And technical support has them running in circles, asking this, that, and the other. A girl also told me, "My mom got tired of calling [technical] support. She's never calling again." (School Personnel 9)

As this teacher pointed out, parents often had to call technical support to receive assistance when their children's computers were not functioning properly, and it could become very costly, placing a disproportionate financial burden on low-income families.[22] Though technical support rarely visited the schools to provide services directly to the students, on the occasions when they were present in the schools, they were inundated with broken computers. This left students without computers for weeks or sometimes even months, which negated the intended efforts of the program to ensure all communities access to technological resources.

Furthermore, school personnel generally were not understanding when it came to difficulties students and families faced in receiving technical support for their school laptops, resulting in conflicts between school personnel, parents, and students on a regular

[22] In Buenos Aires, the use of landlines was limited. Most people relied on cellphones instead, which had high charges for making calls, especially to landlines.

basis. I documented one such conflict between school personnel and students on a day when school personnel planned an activity that required the use of the laptops.

> "The computers caused a huge stink. They never use them, but they were supposed to be taking them to [class today]. 10 of 18 have [their] computer. 5 or so say their computers are at the service center. The service centers are in parks in little stations according to [School Personnel 4]. They give you a date and a time to come, and if you don't do things according to their schedule, it seems like it's a disaster…Several [students] tried to explain what had happened with their particular situations. There was little sympathy, even when it seemed like there was little students could have done. For example, one girl had issues with getting her previous school to give her what she needed to get her computer here. Her parents couldn't go at the date and time they gave them. [School Personnel 4] looked at me and said, "*¿Viste?* [See?], they don't go when they are supposed to and look what happens." (Fieldnote 9.16.15, *Escuela Europea*)

Though it was sometimes out of their control, school personnel tended to blame students and parents for not following the proper protocol when they were unable to have their computers fixed in timely manner. However, students and family were not consulted in the choosing of their appointment times in meeting with technical support, and for Latin American immigrant parents working in exploitative circumstances, this was especially problematic considering the lack of flexibility in their employment.

Positioning Parents as a Threat

In addition to the centering of white, native Argentine students and families and the lack of institutional flexibility, another issue tied to formal and informal policies in working with students and families that disproportionally impacted Latin American immigrants was the schools' positioning of parents as a threat to the schools. Though most parents were approached with a certain level of caution, Latin American immigrant parents were deeply impacted by the schools' limiting entrance into the building and the leveraging of communication notebooks against parents.

Limiting entrance to the school. One of the most visible ways schools positioned themselves against parents was by controlling when, where, and how parents were allowed to interact with the school. Rather than being an integral part of the school community, parents were treated as outsiders with the potential to be a threat to the school. As mentioned previously, schools set rigid guidelines delineating the permitted participation of parents within the building. That meant parents were only allowed in the school if they were explicitly invited, as in the case of a school play or a meeting with a teacher, or if they came to meet with the administration during specific hours determined by the school. This created distance between schools and families, which one teacher explained led to increased difficulties for teachers in developing relationships with families.

> Para mí, en estos últimos años, se alejó mucho a la familia la escuela. No los dejan entrar a la escuela muchas veces. Como, "Los papas, fuera, afuera, ¡afuera!" Y les molesta que las familias entren a la escuela. Por un poco que hubo muchos casos de "inseguridad," para decirlo de una forma, entonces no los quieren dejar entrar los padres. Y para mí es un problema porque después eso determina, en general, como no te conocen, te empiezan a hablar mal de vos o denunciarte porque le trataste mal al nene, o no, no sé, como falsas denuncias. Yo creo que, por eso, porque no están integradas las familias a la escuela…Para mí, deberíamos trabajar mucho más con la familia.
>
> To me, in recent years, the school has distanced itself from the family a lot. They often don't let them into the school. Like, "Parents, out, outside, outside!" And it bothers them when families come into the school. For a while we had a lot of cases of "insecurity," so to speak, so they don't want to let the parents come in. And to me it's a problem because it makes it so that, in general, they [the families] don't know you, they start to talk bad about you or report you because you treated a kid bad, or not, I don't know, like a false report. I think that happens because the families aren't integrated into the school…To me, we should work a lot more with the family. (School Personnel 11)

Here a teacher highlighted the limitations schools have placed on allowing parents in the school in order to protect themselves from potential "insecurity" that they may bring into the

building. However, this came at a heavy cost, with families being removed from educational processes or their participation being heavily regulated. From this teacher's perspective, keeping parents out of the school only served to create more problems, as parents had less familiarity with teachers than they had before schools began limiting the entrance of parents into the building. Any exceptions to this policy were mostly driven by individual teachers, such as the one in the previous example, who sought to incorporate parents into the educational formation of their children, as these efforts were rarely supported by school administrations or other school personnel.

Leveraging of communication notebooks. In addition to limiting the entrance of parents into schools, the use of the communication notebooks that were intended to deliver information between schools and families also demonstrated the positioning of parents as a threat to the schools. Though they were discussed officially as serving to smooth over communication between the school, teachers, and families, the notebooks, known as *cuadernos de comunicado*, also served as a means for schools to defend themselves from potential attacks from parents. Rather than improving relationships between schools and families, the communication notebooks were primarily a way for the school to show documentation of exchanges with parents.

> Es otra de las cuestiones legales que hay en la escuela, lo administrativo legal, digamos. Si mandas un chico un examen, tiene que estar la firma. Si la madre te manda dinero, tiene que estar la firma. Es como una contaduría, que tiene que estar la firma, la nota.
>
> It's another one of those legal questions that the school has, the legal administration, so to speak. If you send an exam home with a kid, the signature has to be there. If the mother sends money, the signature has to be there. It's like bookkeeping in that the signature has to be there with the note. (School Personnel 1)

This use of the notebooks, which the teacher in the previous excerpt refers to as "bookkeeping," served as a convenient mechanism for schools to keep track of students' accounts and records. However, school personnel knew the notebooks were ineffective at communicating important information to parents (see Chapter 4), but they still were used regularly during meetings with parents as a defense for the schools when parents said they were unaware of the information being discussed.

While it was widespread knowledge that even native Argentine parents did not regularly check their children's notebooks, criticism referencing their limited use often fell on Latin American immigrant parents. Few school personnel acknowledged that in addition to having limited time to review the notebooks just like any other parent, for some Latin American immigrants, limited literacy further lessened the usefulness of the notebooks.

> Usamos el cuaderno, pero mayormente, les aviso a la salida cuando quiero hablar con ellos porque como algunos no leen, ¿viste? Les mandas notas, igual. Entonces, o los llamas por teléfono o me paro en la puerta y le digo, "Mira, che. Espero que vengas mañana o cuando puedas."
>
> We use the notebook, but mostly I notify them at the end of the school day when I want to talk to them because some of them don't read. You send notes home just the same. Or you call by phone or I stand at the door and I say, "Look, I hope you come tomorrow or when you can." (School Personnel 10)

Many Latin American immigrants to Buenos Aires came from rural environments with limited access to formal education, and therefore, many were not able to attend school beyond primary schools. Some also spoke indigenous languages such as Quechua, Aymara, and Guaraní, making Spanish, the language in which all communication from the school was written, a second or third language for parents. Consequently, students of such families had

to serve as language brokers[23] for communication between the schools and their families when delivered via written documents such as the communication notebooks. While some school personnel were sensitive to this issue, most ignored the possibility that parents did not speak Spanish as a first language and instead focused on upholding the notebook as the primary form of official communication between the schools and families.

The schools' use of the notebooks to defend themselves from parents and document official communication also appeared to bring to light the potential for parents to use the notebooks against the school. Consequently, teachers were encouraged to keep their written communication to a minimum for fear that parents may later use what was written in the notebooks against the school.

> Tenemos una bajada desde arriba, los docentes, que no hay, que es como uno siempre sabe lo que está escrito. Después no se puede volver para atrás. Como siempre, "Hay que hablar sobre un problema," o "los malentendidos" u otro tipo de cosas. Nosotros tenemos como una bajada de limitarse, solamente así. Si hay un problema con un chico, simplemente, "Necesito que conversar con ustedes," la familia o padres. "Necesito conversar con alguno de ustedes," o simplemente, "Por el comportamiento lo que fuese observado en la clase"…Pero nunca, "Porque su hijo respondió mal," o "Es un maleducado." No. Nunca…Si el padre quiere saber más, se va a acercar a hablar. El cuaderno es muy limitado…Ósea, conseja desde dirección para evitar todo tipo de problema. Porque después de lo que está escrito, hasta el padre, si quiere, como hay tanta gente que interpreta las cosas de otra forma y puede irse hacer una denuncia, ir al distrito a quejarse del maestro. Entonces el cuaderno es solamente, "Necesito conversar con ustedes," se cita a los padres del alumno, y después se arreglará el problema personalmente.
>
> We have an order from above, the teachers, that there isn't, it's like you always have to know what is written. After there is no going back. Like it's always, "A problem must be discussed," or "the things that are misunderstood" or other types of things. We have an order to limit ourselves to only say things like this. If there is a problem with a kid, [it's] simply, "I need to speak with you," or the family or parents. "I need to speak with one of you," or just, "Because of the behavior observed in class"…But

[23] Language brokering is a practice in which children of immigrants serve as translators of the dominant language and culture of the receiving country for their family members.

> never, "Because your child responded in a bad way," or "S/he is ill-mannered." No. Never…If the parent wants to know more, they will come talk. The notebook is very limited…[It's] advice from the administration to avoid all types of problems. Because after it's written, if the parents want, because there are many people that interpret things another way and they can go file a report, go to the district and complain about the teacher. So the notebook is only, "I need to speak with you," you make a meeting time with the parents of the students, and then you resolve the problem in person. (School Personnel 8)

Though none of the school personnel could recall an instance of a parent using their child's *cuaderno de comunicado* to file a report or complain about any school personnel or the school in general, the threat of this possibility transformed the notebooks into a formal document that must be treated with extreme caution. This had the potential to be especially problematic of the relationship between schools and Latin American immigrant families, as for those without legal documentation for being in the country and those working in the textile industry, the formal treatment of the notebook may have posed a threat to their livelihood and ability to remain in Argentina.

Chapter Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the schools' centering of white, native Argentine students and families; the lack of institutional flexibility; and the positioning of parents as a threat provided examples of the ways in which formal and informal educational policy, even if not overtly designed to do so, often worked against Latin American immigrant students and families in the pursuit of a public, formal education in Buenos Aires. Though there were some school personnel that tried to work around these policies to promote more equitable experiences for their students, the policies had a strong impact on the ways in which school personnel were encouraged to work with Latin American immigrant students and families. In combination, these policies systematically positioned Latin American immigrant students

and families as outsiders within the school system, leaving them at a disadvantage in their pursuit of a quality education for their children.

VII: CONCLUSION

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I offered a range of analyses related to the reception of Latin American immigrant students and families in public schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina, examining school personnel perspectives and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant families as well as the enforcement of formal and informal policy in schools that disproportionately impacted Latin American immigrant students and families. These analyses were based on data derived from 15 months of ethnographic research, including interviews with school personnel, photo-elicitation interviews with students, and participant observation in two public schools. To highlight the key findings of this research, in Chapter 7 I revisit the research questions that guided this investigation (see Chapter 1) and discuss the implications of this work. Finally, I consider potential future research to expand on issues brought to light through this investigation.

Discussion of Findings

Research question 1. What is the nature of the relationship between public schools in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families? How are formal and informal policies that impact immigrant students and families carried out within schools? In what ways is this relationship reflective of the relationship between the Argentine state and Latin American immigrant groups in the public sphere?

In this study, I found the relationship between public schools and Latin American immigrants in Buenos Aires to be tense at best. Though federal policy ensured all immigrants residing in Argentina access to public schools, schools systematically placed Latin American immigrant students and families at a disadvantage, denying them access to

equitable educational experiences through the enforcement of formal and informal policy that negatively impacted them (see Chapter 6). However, through the promotion of multicultural rhetoric that focused on treating everyone *equally* rather than treating them *equitably*, schools were able to evade responsibility for their engagement in practices that worked against Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families (see Chapter 4).

While integrating multicultural ideals into schools is a necessary step forward as neighborhood schools diversify in terms of the racial and national compositions of their student bodies, this must be done in a way that critically addresses existing power structures. A superficial integration of multicultural principles is not just insufficient in addressing racial discrimination and dismantling systems that uphold white supremacy—it is dangerous for nondominant populations and directly contradicts their efforts to secure more equitable treatment. When a society views the celebration of visible elements of culture as respect for diversity, it fails to recognize the systems of oppression that exist, and those individuals operating within that society become skilled at veiling racial prejudices by accepting the "stuff" of a group of people without accepting the people themselves.

Research question 2: In what ways is the relationship between public schools and Latin American immigrant students and families impacted by school personnel's approach to working with immigrant groups? How do school personnel view immigrant students and families? How do they understand their role as educators in working with diverse student populations?

Generally speaking, school personnel tended to see Latin American immigrant students and families through a negative lens, often viewing them as deficient in a variety of

ways (see Chapter 4). These negative perceptions of Latin American immigrant students and families shaped their approaches to working with these groups, as Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants were measured constantly against dominant cultural norms. As a result, in moments when Latin American immigrant students and families did not act according to the expectations of schools or the dominant group, a failure to assimilate to Argentine culture was seen as the source of the problem. This ultimately resulted in school personnel justifying their biased views of Latin American immigrants and institutional practices rather than recognizing their, or the schools', contributions to any discontinuities between schools and families and seeking out solutions that worked for Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants.

Nonetheless, important to note is that in discussing the day-to-day operations of schools, there is an unfortunate tendency to treat formal education as if were an isolated sector of society. In failing to treat public schools as an integrated part of modern society, it becomes far too easy to place blame on individual actors, such as school personnel. These school personnel, these *people*, lived in a society that supported discrimination based on notions of white supremacy despite its denial of the existence of social issues related to race, and their position at the top of the social hierarchy was directly related to what played out in their classrooms. Their words and actions should be seen not as mere individual faults but as exemplifications of the systems of inequity that extend far beyond the walls of their schools. These systems maintain their power as a result of their design, which allows for the recognition of nondominant populations without actually disrupting the status quo through the promotion of superficial multiculturalism. Consequently, in honing in on select teachers

as “the problem,” there is a tendency to lose sight of the complexity of equity issues on a broader scale and to ignore the relationship between public schools and society. The reality is that schools are both products and reproducers of social inequity, right alongside other social institutions. A society’s values will inevitably surface in schools, because schools are filled with the people that live within the structures of that society.

My insistence on situating schools and teachers more accurately into broader social contexts and understand them as part of a larger system is not to say that teachers have no individual agency. All of the teachers I interviewed and observed strongly believed they were actively doing what was best for their students. However, many of the teachers’ inability to recognize their own prejudices and positions of social privilege resulted in gaps between their beliefs that discrimination is “bad” and their approaches to working with Latin American immigrants that indicated a more deeply rooted, perhaps even subconscious belief in their racial and cultural superiority. Consequently, the schools’ multicultural approaches to education did not result in more equitable treatment of students of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant families, and if anything, they allowed school personnel to more easily reject the possibility of racial discrimination in their schools. Without the proper tools to dismantle their own prejudices and privilege, they reproduced these social hierarchies within their schools.

However, though the prevailing approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families centered around upholding notions of the superiority of whiteness, school personnel like those involved in the study that went out of their way to seek out information related to these issues (see Chapter 5) were evidence of the power of

exposure to accurate information about social inequities and how one might address their own role in these systems. Their dedication to exploring inequity and their approach to working democratically with Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and their families allowed for more open communication and mutual respect between all parties, and overall a more equitable experience for students. Though these school personnel also occasionally demonstrated problematic views of Latin American immigrants, they actively worked to address and overcome these biases through continued engagement in training related to working with nondominant student populations and collaboration with like-minded teachers to better their practices.

Research question 3: What messages do schools send, either directly or indirectly, to Latin American immigrant students and families about their position within Argentine society?

Through the examination of school personnel perspectives and approaches to working with Latin American immigrant students and families as well as the enforcement of formal and informal policies in schools, it became evident that schools consistently promoted the value of cultural norms and practices of white, native Argentines over those of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families. Several students and school personnel also noted this tendency (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), though it was vehemently denied by the schools' administrations and the majority of teachers (see Chapter 4). Because schools often focused on the "culture" or "nationality" of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants as being the source of their difficulties in the schools or in their

relationships with other students, the implication was that assimilation to the dominant culture would assuage any difficulties Latin American immigrants faced in Argentina.

However, there were limits to the effectiveness of assimilation for avoiding race-related conflicts and discrimination in schools, as cultural and national differences were used to veil biases also linked to the superiority of whiteness. This was evident in, for example, the othering not just of immigrant students and families that had recently arrived in Argentina but also of the students of Latin American immigrant families that had been born and raised in Argentina. Though assimilation elevated their status within the schools, these students were still seen as "foreign" by school personnel as a result of their being of indigenous heritage and therefore outside of the bound of the dominant Argentine national identity.

Although many of these messages coming from schools were indirect, schools still allowed for the circulation of negative images of Latin American immigrants based culture and race, positioning them as inferior to white Argentines. For instance, in their limited responses to conflicts in which white students used racial slurs toward students of Latin American immigrant families (see Chapter 4), there was an implication of the lack of importance of addressing racism and the validity of the targeting of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students based on race. Consequently, the societal positioning of Latin American immigrants below white Argentines was reinforced in schools.

Contributions and Implications

Research contributions.

Examination of local context in addition to policy. Results from this investigation indicated that examination of policy alone is insufficient for understanding equity-related issues, as the application of policy and attitude shifts are essential to combating oppression as well. For instance, as a result of the passage of legislation promoting more equitable treatment of immigrant communities regardless of immigrant status (see Chapter 2), Argentina had been seen as leading the way for protecting the rights of immigrant communities. However, the lack of enforcement of this legislation allowed for continued discrimination against Latin American immigrant students and parents through formal and informal educational policy (see Chapter 6), and the changes in immigration laws did not result in shifts in the perspectives of school personnel toward Latin American immigrant students and parents. Therefore, even though examination of policy and the passage of progressive legislation regarding the rights of nondominant groups are essential to advancing protections for communities such as Latin American immigrants in Argentina, the day-to-day functioning of state institutions like public schools also greatly impacts the lived experiences of such groups. Without thorough enforcement ensuring that the needs of nondominant populations are being met and that institutions are held responsible for implementing changes in how they work with students and families of such group, laws do little to improve the lives of members of nondominant groups.

Need for the continued examination of race. Though there has been resistance to examining race in Latin American contexts, results from this investigation indicated the

need for continued examination of race and whiteness. Although many school personnel, as well as Argentine society on the whole, tended to downplay the importance of race in shaping the educational experiences of students, findings from this study demonstrated an intersection of race, class, and culture in Argentine national identity positioned Latin American immigrants as "others." This was evident in the schools through, for example, race-related conflicts between students (see Chapter 4), school personnel's use of culture to obscure racial biases (see Chapter 5), school policies that disproportionately impacted Latin American immigrant students and families as a result of their level of income, immigration status, form of employment, and cultural norms (see Chapter 6). These findings suggested that the promotion of the superiority of whiteness extends to Latin American contexts, and therefore examinations of the influence of race and white supremacy are necessarily to combat the oppression and subjugation of nondominant groups.

Practical implications.

Critical education training for working with nondominant students and families. Results from this study also indicated that superficial forms of multiculturalism do not combat deeply-rooted biases among school personnel. Though both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* promoted the recognition of the rights and cultural backgrounds of Latin American immigrants, most school personnel struggled to work equitably with students and families of such backgrounds. Furthermore, many school personnel appeared to be unware or incapable of examining these issues in their own practices and perspectives. However, because the school system did not require training in working with students of nondominant backgrounds, ultimately only school personnel interested in improving their skills in

working with such populations received relevant training, and therefore those that likely needed the training the most were the least likely to receive it.

Nonetheless, school personnel that engaged in training in critical education were evidence of the effectiveness of providing educators with the tools to examine their own perspectives and practices, as they were able to work more democratically with students and families of nondominant backgrounds (see Chapter 5). Because these school personnel were more aware of any obstacles students faced due to their stronger relationships with parents, these teachers were able to approach families with more compassion and understanding. For instance, in cases in which Latin American immigrant parents were not regularly present at the school, rather than seeing those parents as "not caring" about their children, they understood the potential difficulty and discomfort sometimes associated with coming to schools to engage with school personnel. This allowed for families and schools personnel to work more collaboratively, and parents were welcomed into the educational processes of their children.

In addition to the need for training for school personnel in working with nondominant populations, the early inclusion of parents is also crucial for improving the educational experiences of such groups. However, this inclusion must be centered around understanding the needs of such communities and founded upon a desire for genuine collaboration. As the school personnel of *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* engaged in critical education demonstrated, including parents early in the academic experiences of their children resulted in improved communication between families as schools, as well as a more prominent role for parents in the educational formation of their children (see Chapter 5).

Wide-reaching applicability of critical education. Though our conversations often focused on the educational experiences of Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrant students and families as a result of the size of the population in the area, several school personnel engaged in critical education were concerned about the consequences of limited dialogue and the reproduction of discriminatory attitudes within schools for students and families of other nondominant groups as well.

> Pero, bueno, también sucede con otros chicos en otras escuelas que no son bolivianos, que no se acomodan al perfil de, digamos, la situación sociocultural que tiene la docencia, porque el docente es un tipo que puede estudiar…Entonces, es como que no acepta otra valorización social que no sea que la que él sostiene, la que él cree que le va bien…Entonces, queremos educar desde la postura nuestra, nuestras reglas, digamos. Y bueno, no solamente se chocan con las comunidades bolivianas. Se chocan con las comunidades paraguaya. Se chocan con las comunidades de las villas históricas.
>
> But, well, it also happens with other kids in other schools that aren't Bolivian that don't fit the profile of the sociocultural situation that the teachers have, because the teacher is the type of person that can study…So, it's as if s/he doesn't accept any other valorization that isn't what s/he supports, what s/he believes is good…So, we want to educate from our stance, our rules, so to speak. And well, it doesn't only clash with Bolivian communities. It also clashes with the Paraguayan community. It clashes with the communities of the shantytowns. (School Personnel 1)

This awareness of the greater social context surrounding the lack of democratic structures within schools allowed for teachers to create equity-based environments without the promotion of superficial multicultural attitudes directed at specific groups of students. For instance, though this teacher often had conversations about differing customs between surrounding Latin American countries and Argentina with students and parents, there was also extensive dialogue about the needs of the community based on issues related to financial resources, gender, nationality, race, and culture.

"Studying up" as leveraging white privilege. In the initial planning of this investigation, I had intended to structure data collection to work primarily with Latin American immigrant parents and the local community to better understand their lives and needs as they related to public education. However, while in the field, it became evident that I was being readily accepted among school personnel, and as a result, I began to see that I could leverage my privileged position as a white woman to study the public education system from the inside. A number of social science scholars have argued for the importance of "studying up" (e.g., Hale 2006; Nader 1972), or investigating the perspectives and practices of the dominant group in order to understand the forces the shape the experience of nondominant groups. Nonetheless, this is still not a widespread approach in social science research.

As a white woman engaged in social justice work related to race, studying up had several advantages for both practical and theoretical purposes. First, I was able to access the social spaces of school personnel and perspectives that would not have been shared with anyone not considered white, allowing me to utilize the perception of a shared identity as white to access in-depth information regarding the ways in which schools and school personnel reinforced notions of the superiority of whiteness. Second, given anthropology's extensive history of exoticizing communities of color, I sought to design my research to work toward improving the circumstances of Latin American immigrant without continuing to center and elevate whiteness. As Hale (2006) pointed out, through the studying of white populations, researchers have the opportunity to combat the way social science has contributed to this process:

> One principal catalyst for whiteness studies has been to analyze and contest the way white racial dominance has been reproduced through assertions of universality, or more subtly still, by making white particularly stand as the unmarked, yet ubiquitous standard of social organization. Anthropology has been complicit with this racial hegemony in our consistent preference to study subordinate peoples, with ample respect for cultural particularity, but also with the implicit premise that difference from the dominant racial norm is what makes people into attractive subjects of study. Whiteness studies ask that we reverse the lens. (p. 203)

Through the examination of whiteness, as well as systems that perpetuate white supremacy, researchers can advance understandings of the nuances of whiteness and highlight its complexities while also destabilizing ideology that promotes it as the norm.

Future Research

Considering the perspectives of children of nondominant backgrounds. Though this study was focused primarily on examining school personnel perspectives and institutional policies, taking into consideration the perspectives of students was also important for understanding the environments within public schools. As seen in this investigation, students even as young as age 10 were fully capable of contributing to the examination of the schools' climate, with several discussing their views on topics such as racial conflicts that took place within the schools (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, though school personnel shared several problematic events that had occurred at the schools, at *Escuela Europea* especially, students tended to be much more open about these occurrences than school personnel. Students of Latin American immigrant families in particular were crucial in examining these issues from multiple angles, as having experienced discrimination based on their race, class, and culture had shaped their perspectives on these issues within schools.

In addition to the perspectives of students related to their schooling experiences included in this study, photo-elicitation interviews with Latin American immigrant students also provided rich data related to their experiences outside of schools. Through their photos, they shared intimate details of their lives, including moments with friends and family members, their living conditions, and other activities in which they were involved. In discussions of these photos, many students demonstrated a thorough understanding of their families' circumstances as a result of taking on important roles within their households, and their engagement in unique blends of activities and ideas related to their home cultures and Argentine culture indicated the development of complex social identities. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss here, my fieldwork indicated a need for the continued examination of the lives of children nondominant backgrounds, such as those of Latin American immigrant families, from their own perspectives, as their positions in schools, at home, and in society were distinct from both school personnel and their parents.

Working with local communities. Not only did this investigation suggest the importance of working more in depth with children, it also brought to light the need for understanding the perspectives of local communities of nondominant backgrounds in examinations of the reception of such groups into state institutions such as public schools. In my case, working with community organizations became impossible due to difficult circumstances facing local organizations, such as threats of violence against employees for their work in reducing gang activity in the area. However, it was clear that these organizations were able to work closely with local Latin American immigrant families and provided a stable source of support in a welcoming environment. Furthermore, because

these community organizations were also comprised of individuals primarily from nondominant groups, they understood the needs of such groups with attention to nuance based on individual circumstances. Consequently, working with such groups embedded in the local community has the potential to provide yet another angle on issues impacting nondominant groups.

Understanding the intersection of class, race, and nationality with gender in educational contexts. While advances have been made in understanding the differing roles of girls and boys in families and society across Latin America, there is still relatively little in the way of understanding how schooling experiences differ based on gender. Whereas this study was designed to examine intersections of class, race, and nationality, it was not adequately situated to investigate the impacts of gender on educational experiences. However, over the course of my fieldwork, the position of girls of Latin American immigrant families in public schools often influenced their interactions with school personnel. For instance, within *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina*, girls generally were expected to be more mature, docile, and studious than boys. While this was the case for girl students overall, when exhibiting those expected behaviors and dispositions, girls of Latin American immigrant families were ignored, receiving neither praise nor disapproval, whereas their counterparts of European descent were framed as ideal students. Though school personnel highlighted a "lack of participation" in class among Latin American immigrant girls as a result of such students rarely raising their hands to answer questions, even during instances when girls of Latin American immigrant backgrounds did engage in active, verbal participation, their contributions often went unnoticed by school personnel and

white Argentine students. Thus, the expectations of girls of Latin American immigrant families compared to white Argentine girls, as well as boys of Latin American immigrant families and those of white Argentine boys, warrants further examination.

Developing holistic images of the lives of immigrant families. Though public schools are an integral part of cultural (re)production and play an essential role in maintaining social stratification, immigrant communities interact with the state and the dominant group across a variety of institutions, both form and informal. Because institutions operate according to their own established policies and norms, they sometimes possess characteristics that may not be present in other institutions or may take on a different form. Consequently, while schools are an important part of society with a strong impact on students and families, it is also essential to understand how other institutions function and uphold notions of the superiority of whiteness.

Furthermore, institutions often overlap, creating unique and shifting circumstances for the people navigating them. For instance, the administrations of both *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* occasionally worked with legal teams to address issues believed to go beyond the scope of the schools, such as in cases of family violence. Once such steps were taken, families would continue to interact with schools but would then also begin to interact with the legal system and possibly even the medical system. Each of these sectors possess its own institutional norms and policies, and thus the perception of Latin American immigrant groups and the policies that impact them may vary. Though understanding the overlap of the institutions with which Latin American immigrant families interacted was not directly addressed in this study, it undoubtedly impacted the experiences of such communities.

Consequently, the reception of Latin American immigrant communities and the policies that impact them must be examined across a range of social institutions in order to develop a more holistic understanding of the day-to-day lives of Latin American immigrant groups and the forces that shape their experiences.

Investigating how schools can provide access to additional resources. Though it was beyond the scope of this study to investigate the ways in which schools could provide access to non-educational resources, the opportunity for schools to meet this need became increasingly visible throughout my fieldwork. Parents, especially mothers, sometimes sought support from school personnel regarding difficulties in other aspects of their lives. However, schools were often either not adequately equipped to provide access and information to services, or school personnel were unwilling to assist in seeking out resources for families. Furthermore, during instances when school personnel were looking to provide information and access to additional resources, though they received verbal support from their school administrations and other school personnel, they received little support in institutionalizing such approaches to working with families. As a result, their efforts were treated as individual projects, greatly limiting the impact and reach of their efforts. Nonetheless, there was potential for schools to fill this void, especially for Latin American immigrant families, and research in this area has the potential to greatly benefit nondominant groups.

Public schools are in a unique position compared to other institutions in that all children are required to attend, and therefore both children and their families regularly interact with the institution. This provides an ideal opportunity for the dissemination of

information and resources for the benefit of their communities. For Latin American immigrant parents, given that their social networks often were limited as a result of migration, school personnel were sometimes the only people they had regular access to who knew how to navigate public resources in Buenos Aires, which even native Argentines sometimes struggled to utilize as a result of extensive bureaucracy. Furthermore, as one teacher pointed out, school personnel were also sometimes the only people Latin American immigrant parents knew that *would be allowed* access to resources, as Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants faced discrimination in other institutions just as frequently as in schools.

> Se sienten…despreciadas, que "si yo te acompaño al médico, le van a prestar más atención porque está conmigo." ¿No? Y es realidad. Esa es la tristeza, que es verdad. Que he ido con mi compañera…Yo estoy hablando de una compañera boliviana…He ido con compañeras para que la atienda, donde yo me he peleado para que la atienda, y cuando estoy yo es otro trato. Que ellas misma me dicen, "Cuando vas es otro trato."
>
> They feel…disregarded, because "if I go with you to the doctor, they are going to pay more attention to you because you are with me." That's the reality. That's the sad part, that it's true. I've gone with my friend…I am talking about a Bolivian friend…I've gone with friends so that they attend to her, where I have had to fight so that they attend to her, and when I'm there they are treated differently. Even they have told me, "When you go it's a different treatment." (School Personnel 6)

As this teacher pointed out, being primarily white, native Argentines, school personnel often were received better at other institutions that provided public services than Latin American immigrants. In this teacher's case, she leveraged that privilege to help Bolivian friends receive more equitable treatment. However, Latin American immigrant families must be supported more systematically, as leaving the facilitation of access to resources to the will of members of the dominant group does not provide stability to the community, nor does it

address the biases underlying Latin American immigrants' difficulty in accessing the services they need to begin with.

Examining the resurgence of xenophobic and racist attitudes throughout the Americas. Since the completion of my fieldwork at the end of 2015, political shifts have occurred in Argentina and throughout the Americas, reflecting and also generating cultural changes. While xenophobia and racism have long been present throughout the Americas (e.g., Chasteen, 2006; Daniels, 2004; Robinson, 2008), a resurgence of public displays of anti-immigrant sentiment and blatantly discriminatory policy have been sweeping Argentina and the region at large.

In December 2015, Mauricio Macri assumed the role of President of the Republic of Argentina (Romero & Gilbert, 2015). As the former Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, Macri's policies were viewed by those on the left as favoring the wealthy, leaving poorer neighborhoods, such as the neighborhood in which *Escuela Europea* and *Escuela Andina* were located, with limited resources, and many feared the same would take place on a national level once he assumed the presidency. Macri was also known for his conservative views and anti-immigrant stances, leading to concerns that he would undo progressive legislation put in place by the previous administration and sparking protests and acts of resistance throughout the City of Buenos Aires (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

Figure 7.1. Poster of Mauricio Macri in the Image of Adolph Hitler (right) Juxtaposed with Street Art Representing an Indigenous Girl (left) in the San Telmo District of Buenos Aires. Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 11 April 2016.

Figure 7.2. Demonstrators Protesting the Policies of Mauricio Macri in the San Nicolás District of Buenos Aires. Photo by Jaycee L. Bigham, 13 April 2016.

Since assuming office, Macri has made substantial changes to federal economic and social policy reflecting conservative values. While scapegoating Latin American immigrants for the country's ills is not new to Argentina, Macri's administration has become increasingly direct in its claims of associations between crime and Latin American immigrants. For instance, Security Minister Patricia Bullrich claimed,

> Citizens from Peru and Paraguay are coming here and they end up killing one another over control of the drug trade. Many Paraguayans, Bolivians and Peruvians are involved, either providing the capital or as drug mules, as drivers or as part of a chain. (Urra, 2017)

Furthermore, in January 2017, Macri issued a presidential decree modifying immigration laws to make it easier to restrict the entry of and deport immigrants, connecting the changes in legislation directly to crime rates among Latin American immigrants (Romero & Politi, 2017). The decree has been heavily criticized by immigrant rights advocates and those on the political left, with some highlighting the use of "misleading" statistics to justify the discriminatory policy (e.g., Pannel & Galvis-Delgado, 2017). The decree also attracted the attention of Bolivian President Evo Morales, who likened the policy to those proposed by U.S. President Donald J. Trump to limit immigration from Latin America and the Middle East (Cué, 2017). The decree combined with inflammatory remarks made by Macri's administration have incited anxieties across the country: among Latin American immigrant communities now concerned with how they may be targeted by the federal government, and among wealthy and white populations of Argentina who fear the growth of insecurity tied to Latin American immigration.

The same trend of a reemergence of public xenophobic and racist attitudes against nondominant groups has been noted throughout the Americas, such as: in the U.S. against

Mexican and Central American immigrant populations (Chomsky, 2016); in Chile against Peruvian, Bolivian, and Ecuadorian immigrant populations (Bonnefoy, 2011); and in Mexico against Central American immigrant populations (Suárez, Knippen, & Meyer, 2016). While these populations have distinct experiences and histories with their host countries based on additional contextual factors (e.g., language, religious affiliation), each tends to make up a large portion of low-income labor sectors and is of a nondominant racial group, and within their host countries, they face harsh discrimination, exploitation, and violence by individuals as well as institutions. Understanding the roots of this resurgence of explicitly xenophobic and racist ideology is crucial as political, environmental, and economic crises continue to fuel global migration, with no end in sight. Not only do these issues bring about concern regarding how nondominant immigrant groups will be received in their host countries, they also suggest that the white supremacy that lies at the foundation of these issues has never been thoroughly addressed.

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Appendix

Interview Guides

Interviews with school personnel.

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself, such as how long you have been teacher/administrator, where you have taught, etc.
2. How would you describe your experience working at this school? If you have worked at other schools, what is unique about working at this school?
3. Please tell me a little about the neighborhood where the school is located. For example, who lives here? What types of activities are common here? Is there anything unique about this community?
4. Do you live in the neighborhood? If not, how much time would you estimate you spend in the neighborhood outside of school hours per week? What kinds of things do you do in the neighborhood?
5. In general, do you feel comfortable walking around the neighborhood? What makes you feel this way? What parts of the neighborhood in particular that you prefer to be in? What makes these parts of the neighborhood preferable compared to others?
6. Please tell me about the types of students that attend the school/your classes and their families. What ethnic and/or national backgrounds do they come from? What economic backgrounds do they come from? What types of work do they do for a living?

7. How would you describe your relationships with the families of the students in your class/school? What differences have you noticed between students of different backgrounds?
8. On a day-to-day basis, how do you typically communicate information to the parents of students in your classes/school? What types of information are provided to parents?
9. In what ways have these types of communication been effective? In what ways have they been ineffective?
10. Please tell me about your interactions with parents of students in your class. What types of face-to-face interactions do you have with them? How are they?
11. How do parents typically communicate with you? In what ways is this communication effective and in what ways is it ineffective?
12. How might the communication between the school and students' families be improved?
13. In terms of communication and involvement, what differences do you notice between the parents that have immigrated from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay compared to the parents that are native Argentines? In what ways do these differences impact the education of their children?
14. What events or activities does the school currently host in attempts to invite parents into the school? In what ways have these events to been effective and in what ways have they been ineffective?

15. In what ways does the school participate in community events? Do you feel that this level of participation is appropriate for a public school? Why do you feel this way?
16. Pedagogically, do you use different teaching strategies with certain groups of students in your classes/school? What are those strategies? With which groups of students do you use them? How did you learn these strategies?
17. What type of training, if any, have you received from the school, the district, or the City of Buenos Aires related to working with students and families of diverse backgrounds? How has this training benefited you and your students?
18. Do you feel that the school provides a comfortable environment for students of diverse backgrounds? If so, how does the school achieve this?
19. What do you think the experiences of Andean and Paraguayan immigrant students or children with immigrant parents are like within your school? What have you seen within the school that has made you feel this way?

Photo-elicitation interviews with children.

1. Tell me about your experiences taking photos for this project. Did you take them by yourself or did someone else, such as your parents, help with this? If you had help, what did that person do to help?
2. What did you enjoy about taking the photos? What did you not enjoy?
3. Tell me about the photos you took. Why did you take these photos?
4. Tell me about the people in the photos. Who are they, and why are they important to you?
5. Which photos are your favorites? What about them makes you like them?

6. Do you see yourself as Bolivian/Peruvian/Paraguayan? If so, in what ways?
7. Do you see yourself as Argentine? If so, in what ways?
8. How do your classmates see you? Do you think they see you as Bolivian/Peruvian/Paraguayan, as Argentine, or a mix of both? What makes you think they see you this way?
9. What about your teachers? How do they see you? What makes you think they see you this way?
10. Do you ever talk about the culture where your family is from at school? If so, with whom? What do you talk to them about?
11. Where, in general, do you and your family live? How close do you live to the schools? How do you get to school in the morning?
12. What kinds of things do you and your parents talk about that are related to school? How often do you talk about these things?
13. Schools sometimes have events to which families are invited. Does anyone from your family ever come to the schools? If so, what kinds of events to they come to the school for?